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On Learning from Experience:
Existential Perspectives on
Teaching and Writing
about Psychotherapy

Martin Adams

Context Statement

Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works
Metanoia Institute
Middlesex University
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Contents

Abstract	4
1. Introduction	
1.1 Setting the scene	5
1.2 My work context	6
1.3 Why this? Why now?	7
1.4 The Context Statement chapter by chapter	8
1.5 Terminology	8
2. Timeline 1968 – 2020	10
3. Some thoughts on research and researching	19
3.1 Phenomenology	19
Fig. 1 Phenomenology and Attention	20
3.2 Reflexivity	20
3.3 Learning to read and understand	21
3.4 Testing things out	22
3.5 Learning about learning: the Skills Learning Process	22
Fig. 2 The Skills Learning Process	24
3.6 Models of experiential learning	24
Fig. 3 Kolb's four stage model	25
3.7 Moustakas Heuristic Inquiry	25
Fig. 4 Moustakas' six phases	26
Fig. 5 Moustakas' seven processes	27
4. Learning about learning: a personal journey	28
4.1 Beginning at the beginning	29
4.2 The Northgate Clinic	30
4.3 Psychoanalysis	30
4.4 Youth and Community Work	31
4.5 Learning to teach counselling and psychotherapy	31
4.6 Learning to write about counselling and psychotherapy	32
5. My public works	34
5.1 Two early pieces of writing	34
Timeline	34
5.1.a <i>Reflections on 'Reflections on Meditation'</i>	35
5.1.b <i>Ronnieism - a pathological condition or an existential given?</i>	35
5.2 Existentialism and Therapeutic Practice	
Teaching and conferences timeline	36
Writing timeline	37
5.2.a Origins	37
5.2.b Teaching existential practice	38
Reflections on the teaching process	38
Impact and Evidence	39
5.2.c. Writing about existential practice	40
5.2.c.1 <i>Practising Phenomenology: some reflections and considerations</i> (2001)	40
Reflections on the writing process	40
Impact and Evidence	40
5.2.c.2 <i>Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy</i> (2011 / 2016)	40

Reflections on the writing process	40
Impact and Evidence	41
5.2.c.3 <i>A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling</i> (2013)	42
Reflections on the writing process	42
Impact and Evidence	43
5.2.c.4 <i>The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy</i> (2019)	44
Reflections on the writing process	44
Impact and Evidence	44
5.3 Existentialism and Human Development	45
Teaching and conferences timeline	45
Writing timeline	46
5.3.a Origins	46
5.3.b Teaching existentialism and human development	47
Reflections on the writing process	47
Impact and Evidence	50
5.3.c Writing about existentialism and human development	53
Reflections on the writing process	53
Impact and Evidence	56
5.4 <i>Case Studies in Existential Therapy: Translating theory into practice</i> (2019)	58
Reflections on the writing process	58
Impact and Evidence	58
5.5 <i>Existential Analysis</i>	58
Timeline	
5.5.a Book reviews editor, <i>Existential Analysis</i> 2007 – 2017	59
Book reviews, <i>Existential Analysis</i> 2007 – 2020 timeline	59
Reflections on the writing process	59
Impact and Evidence	61
5.5.b Co-editor 2017 -2020	61
Reflections on the writing process	61
Impact and Evidence	61
6. Teaching existentially, or teaching about existentialism?	62
Writing existentially, or writing about existentialism?	
Table 1. Comparison of therapy, teaching and writing	63
7. Conclusion	70
Creative Synthesis	71
8. References	
Appendix 1 Public Works	
Appendix 2 Evidence and Impact	
Appendix 3 Supplementary materials	

Abstract

This context statement is a reflexive audit of the process and development of my public works, concentrating on the last five years, and is submitted to fulfill the requirements of the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works.

The public works under consideration are my work teaching and writing about therapeutic practice and also human development, both from an existential and phenomenological perspective.

My contention is not just that both teaching and writing facilitate learning, but that the way psychotherapy is taught and the way psychotherapy is written about determines whether what is learnt makes a difference to how students and readers live. The determining factor is the extent to which both teacher and student, and writer and reader, are engaged in what is taught and written. This context statement examines this question of engagement.

Like everything, my public works have a history and prior to reviewing them and evaluating their impact I look firstly at my informal research into experiential learning and then I look at my own history of learning about learning. Moustakas' Heuristic Inquiry is used as a loose framework to describe both this learning and also the writing of this context statement.

While the principle written works within the five year window are *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* (2016), and *An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives* (2018), I also review and evaluate the impact of my contribution to the publication of the journal *Existential Analysis*, both as book reviews editor and also as co-editor.

As a result of this review, in the penultimate chapter I examine what it means to teach existentially, rather than to teach about existentialism, and to write existentially, rather than to write about existentialism.

In the conclusion I summarise the whole context statement with a Creative Synthesis and also make some suggestions for the future.

Keywords: Teaching, writing, existentialism, phenomenology, skills learning process, therapeutic practice, human development, polyphony, freedom and structure, way-of-being, immersion, creative synthesis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene

This context statement is a reflexive audit of my public works in the last five years.

These are in three areas.

One is my work teaching and writing about existential-phenomenological therapeutic practice. This consists of designing and teaching the existential practice module on the DProf and DPsych courses at The New School of Counselling and Psychotherapy and writing about it in *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* (2016) (SIECP), and *The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy* (2019),

Another is my work teaching and writing about an existential-phenomenological approach to human development. This consists of designing and teaching the human development module on the DProf and DPsych courses at The New School of Counselling and Psychotherapy and presenting at conferences (2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019), and also writing about it, principally in the book *An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives* (2018) (AEAHD).

My chapter in *Case Studies in Existential Therapy* (2019) connects these two fields up and in this context statement I have included it in the section on human development.

The third is my work as Book Reviews editor (until 2017) and co-editor of the professional journal, *Existential Analysis* (from 2017).

What these three areas have in common is that they are about the way teaching and writing can promote learning. I will therefore be talking not so much about what people learn, but what people need in order to learn, and how these can be incorporated in their different ways into teaching and writing.

I have always been curious about learning, and this has led to an understanding of how my personal life and my public works are entwined. In this sense then, all existential learning is personal learning. Therefore, running through this context statement is the principle that existentialism and phenomenology are more than just interesting sets of ideas that we can dip into from time to time; they are ways of living.

Returning to the three work areas; since they are all about encouraging learning, I am suggesting here that the principle differences are functions of context. Just as there is an existential and phenomenological way of being a psychotherapist, there is also an existential and phenomenological way of teaching, and an existential and phenomenological way of writing, and that these, in their different ways, can promote personal learning.

The first of these, being a psychotherapist, is difficult to record in terms of public, i.e. published, works. Instead I will be referring to it from time to time in terms of what I have learnt about it, and also what I have written about it. It is the foundation of my teaching and writing.

Teaching psychotherapy involves integrating all the impressions and ideas that I have gleaned both from my own practice, from my reading and from everyday life, and communicating them in a way that can be understood. It involves working out the best way that the skills of being a psychotherapist can be talked about, taught, and then learnt. In teaching, as in therapy, I rely on the immediacy of the encounter for feedback and not just on the accuracy of the content, but on the way I am teaching it.

Writing about psychotherapy involves another, more formal, translation. What I write has to be clear and unambiguous at the same time as giving space for the reader to consider what is written. This is particularly challenging if the material itself is unclear and ambiguous and especially so in a discipline such as psychotherapy that situates itself between freedom; dynamic ambiguity on the one hand, and structure; theoretical clarity, on the other.

The second and third of these, what I have learnt about teaching and writing, I have been working out experientially over a number of years and have not yet made public in any explicit or formulated way prior to this context statement.

1.2 My work context.

My professional stage has not been large. I have not managed, or aspired to manage, projects, departments or organisations or to directly influence policy. Although I have had opportunities, I never wished to become a part of the administrative hierarchy of what Paulo Freire (1972) calls the banking method of education. Instead, I have worked as an existential psychotherapist, a teacher of existential psychotherapy and a writer on existential psychotherapy for 30 years.

This has allowed me to develop my work interests relatively independently of therapeutic fashion or institutional demands.

I have inevitably influenced a number of people who have been my clients in various contexts, a much larger number of people that I have taught and who have gone on to take existential therapy into the future, and an even larger number, necessarily unknown, through my writing.

I have been able to draw on evidence to show that my influence has been far greater than I imagined possible when I started to write this context statement.

1.3 Why this? Why now?

These are the best existential questions.

Why am I doing the Doctorate by Public Works now, or even at all? It's not because I need it for career advancement. Some twelve years ago, and one year in to a Professional Doctorate course, I was invited to be co-author of *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* (SIECP) that was published in 2011. I knew I could not do both. I had to choose which. The possibility of a published public work was more appealing than what would inevitably have been a far more private work. I therefore stopped the Professional Doctorate. That book (SIECP) not only tied in well with my work experience up until that time but, and of course I was not to know this then, it was when the writing part of my professional life took off, the most recent of which is *An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives* (2018) (AEAHD).

Coming towards the end of my career, and with the end of my life just over the horizon - I am now over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through my life if statistical norms are to be relied on - it seemed a good time to pause and reflect developmentally on what brought me to this place, to think more about where this place is, and also to evaluate the journey.

This context statement is therefore a review of my life and public works in the last five years.

My research project for the Professional Doctorate was going to be about the challenges of retirement – something I knew was in store for me not too far in the future. The formal research was never done, but the informal research was and is still being done, by me as I get older. I have been meeting the challenges of retirement and ageing and my book *An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives* (2018) is one of the products of this research. This context statement is another.

But a review, a reflexive audit, is always done by looking back, and acknowledging this the existential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1996: 161) said,

'It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards. And if one thinks over that proposition it becomes more and more evident that life can never really be understood in time because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting place from which to understand it'.

What he means is not only that insight only ever occurs after the event, but also that it is always provisional; it is always subject to change. Something that appeared significant at one time can turn out not to have been important, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, the paradox is that although there is no ultimate resting place (apart from death), we are always looking back trying to understand how things got to be the way they are. Life is a story, and we write it by the way we live and the way we die. The only conclusion is

that one resting place is about as good as any other. Therefore it is at this point in my career, in my life, that I am looking back from. Another point would produce a different perspective, a different context statement.

Many of the existential philosophers wrote in different genres, including fiction, and a narrative writing style is therefore distinctive of much existential writing. Within the constraints of the guidelines of the context statement I will therefore be using a narrative writing style.

1.4 The Context Statement chapter by chapter

Chapter 2 is a timeline of my education and work.

In chapter 3, Some thoughts about researching and research, I talk about the research background of my public works, both informal and formal.

In chapter 4, My learning history, I reflect on some of the formative events that led up to being an existential psychotherapist, teacher of existential psychotherapy and a writer about existential psychotherapy.

In chapter 5, My public works, I reflect on how my teaching and writing in the two areas of existential practice and human development came about and evolved. I will also be evaluating them.

In chapter 6, Teaching existentially, or teaching about existentialism? Writing existentially, or writing about existentialism?, I draw together some of the threads from previous chapters and examine the existential challenges presented by translating between doing, teaching and writing about psychotherapy.

It is not the primary purpose of this context statement to develop a new theory of anything, rather than to review what I have done so far. Having said that, this review is worth nothing if it contains nothing transferable. Knowledge doesn't stand still, nor will there ever be a point at which everything is known. I started to write this introduction at the beginning of the writing process when I had no idea of the outcome, and it continued to be written until the end. All I had was a confidence, a faith, that writing and reflecting would reveal something that had hitherto eluded me.

In chapter 7, I review the entire process and present, in Moustakas' terms, a Creative Synthesis of my findings.

1.5 Terminology.

Finally, a note about terminology. In this context statement the terms phenomenology and existentialism will occur both together and apart. Phenomenology is a research method that can be used to investigate any aspect of human meaning. The philosophy known generically as existentialism is the body of knowledge that arises when phenomenology is used to investigate the nature of existence. That there are a number of strands to existential philosophy is because each philosopher has a slightly different way of operationalising phenomenology. They all looked at life differently. How could they not? None are asserting that they are the 'one true

way', rather than saying something like 'this is what it looks like from here'. The viewpoint is inseparable from the viewer. This is a phenomenological truth.

Similar issues arise when the terms phenomenology and existentialism are applied to psychotherapy. What I generically call existential therapy has developed in different directions in different parts of the world and these have been covered elsewhere e.g. by Cooper (2016).

The term Existential-Phenomenological Therapy has recently (Deurzen et al 2019) been adopted for the dominant UK viewpoint. This term was chosen because in terms of therapy, existentialism and phenomenology are indivisible. Also, the common adjunct 'psycho-', as in 'mind' or 'soul' is missed off because both existentially and phenomenologically, the notion of the individual mind is problematic and Existential-Phenomenological Therapists consider they work with the person as they are in-the-world, as Heidegger (1962) put it. I will only be using the term Existential-Phenomenological Therapy when referring to it specifically. Otherwise the terms will be used generically.

Also, conventionally, prior to qualification, counselling psychologists are called 'trainees' whereas people on psychotherapy and counselling courses are called 'students'. To save referring to these groups in this context statement as 'students and trainees', I will refer to them collectively as 'students'.

2. Timeline

An entry in **bold** means that it is referred to in the text

Year	Education	Work	Lectures/ Conference presentations	Writing
1968	Leave school			
1969 to 1972	BSc Psychology North East London Polytechnic (now University of East London)			<i>Reflections on 'Reflections on Meditation' Student Union Newspaper</i>
1973 to 1975		Social Therapist at the Northgate Clinic, London		
1975 to 1976	Diploma in Community and Youth Work			
1976 to 1989		Youth and Community Worker, London, SE1 and E17		
1986 to 1988	Diploma in Counselling and Supervision – Roehampton Institute			
1989 - 1990		Hertfordshire Social Services. Training Officer specialising in counselling training.		
1989 to 1998		Counselling Lecturer at CSCT.		Tutor guide and Student guide for the Diploma in Psychodynamic Therapeutic Counselling. (1997)
1990 to present		Private Practice as Counsellor/ Psychotherapist and Supervisor		

1990 to 2005		Counsellor in a GP surgery, Saffron Walden, Essex		
1993 to 1994	MA Counselling. University of Hertfordshire			Dissertation: "I don't know, what do you think" - Dimensions of Unknowing in the Counselling Process.
1995				Society for Existential Analysis newsletter. <i>Reflections on 'Reflections on Meditation'2e</i>
1996 to 1998	Advanced Diploma in Existential Psychotherapy (ADEP) Regents University, London.			
1996 to 2017		Regents University, London (RUL) Module leader, Foundation course.		
1997 to 2017		New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, London (NSPC) Design and teach the module Existential Practice		
1998				Society for Existential Analysis newsletter. <i>Ronnieism - a pathological condition or an existential given?</i>
2000			Conference presentation. Society for Existential Analysis annual conference. <i>Practicing Phenomenology: some Reflections and Considerations</i>	
2001				Existential Analysis 12.1. 65 – 84 <i>Practising Phenomenology: some reflections and</i>

				considerations.
2002				Existential Analysis 13.2: 204-213 <i>Reflections on Reflection</i>
2004 to present		NSPC. Design and teach the module 'Life Span Psychology'.		
2005				Existential Perspectives on Human Issues: A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice. Ed. van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker. Chapter: Death, with M. Cooper
2006				Existential Analysis 17.2. <i>Towards an Existential Phenomenological theory of Human Development.</i>
2006 - present		Regents University, London (RUL) Academic Supervisor MA Counselling and Psychotherapy		
2007				Existential Analysis 18.2 <i>The Ontology of Change. Dilemma and Tragedy as Gateways to Deeper Meaning.</i> with M. Jenkinson
2007				Existential Analysis 18.1: 103-116. <i>Q-Methodology as a Phenomenological Research Method</i> with P. Shinebourne
2007 to 2017		Book reviews editor. Existential Analysis		
2007				Counselling and Psychotherapy Research 7(4) <i>Therapists' understandings and experiences of working with clients with</i>

				<i>problems of addiction: a pilot study using Q methodology, with P. Shinebourne</i>
2007				Existential Analysis 18.1 2007: 184-187. Book review. <i>The Other Side of You</i> . Salley Vickers.
2009		Design and teach 'The Human Life Span – an Existential Phenomenological approach' at SPPE (Portuguese Society for Existential Psychotherapy)		
2009				Existential Perspectives on Supervision ed. E. van Deurzen and Young. Chapter <i>Phenomenology and Supervision</i> : London: Palgrave.
2009				Existential Analysis 20.2 Book Review. <i>Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic and Philosophical Reflections</i> . Robert Stolorow (2007) The Analytic Press
2009 - 2010		Regents University, London (RUL) Design and teach the module Clinical Practice Development		
2009 to 2016		Regents University, London (RUL) Design and teach the module Existential Human Development		
2011				Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy (with E. van Deurzen) London: Sage. SIECP1e

2011				Existential Analysis 22.1 Book Review. <i>The Case for Working with Your Hands: or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good</i> , Matthew Crawford.
2011				Existential Analysis 22.2 Book Review. <i>The Sartre Dictionary. Sartre and Fiction. How to be an Existentialist</i> , Gary Cox
2012			Conference presentation. <i>Human Development from an Existential Phenomenological Perspective</i> at the 8th Forum of the International Federation of Daseinsanalysis, Budapest.	
2012 - 2015		Regents University, London (RUL) Internal Examiner DCounPsych		
2012 - 2017		Regents University, London (RUL) Academic Supervisor DCounPsych		
2013				Existential Analysis 24.1 <i>Human Development from an Existential Phenomenological Perspective: Some Thoughts and Considerations.</i>
2013				Existential Perspectives on Relationship Therapy Deurzen E. van and Iacovou S. (eds.) (2013) London: Palgrave Chapter 15: <i>Working with Relationship Violence and Abuse</i> with Mark Jepson
2013				A Concise

				Introduction to Existential Counselling. London: Sage. (ACIEC)
2013			Two lectures at Södertörn University, Stockholm, on <i>The phenomenological method applied to existential counselling and therapy.</i>	
2013				Existential Analysis 24.2 Book Review. <i>The Existentialist's Guide to Death, the Universe and Nothingness.</i> Gary Cox.
2013			Conference presentation. <i>What does it mean to think existentially about human development?</i> Existence and Psychotherapy: Existential perspectives for an efficient therapeutic practice. Karpathos, Greece.	
2014				Counselling Psychology Review Vol. 29:2, 2014, Human development and existential counselling psychology.
2014				Daseinsanalyse 30, 3-10 <i>Human Development from a Existential-Phenomenological Perspective.</i>
2015			World Congress for Existential Therapy, London. Three presentations. 1. Existential Therapy As A Skills Learning Process. 2. From Birth to	

			<i>Retirement and Beyond: Towards An Existential Model of Human Development Through the Life Span.</i> 3. Round table. <i>Time, Death and Development through the Life-Span.</i>	
2015				Existential Analysis 26.2 Book Review. <i>Sailing - Catching the Drift of Why We Sail.</i> Goold P. (ed.), (2012). <i>Cycling: A Philosophical Tour De Force</i> (Ilundáin-Agurruza, J. and Austin, M. (eds.)(2010).
2016				Existential Analysis 27.1: 58 – 69 <i>Existential Therapy As A Skills Learning Process.</i>
2016				Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy 2nd edition (with E. van Deurzen) Sage. (SIECP 2e)
2016			Conference presentation. NSPC at 20 years: How we live. <i>Existential Therapy and Human Development</i>	
2018				An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives. London: Palgrave. (AEAHD)
2018				Case Studies in Existential Therapy, ed S. Du Plock. Wiley. Chapter: <i>On discovering that time is passing</i>

2018				The Psychologist July 2018. <i>Windows on our inner and outer worlds: How do psychologists' own artistic creations reflect their internal lives and approach to the stuff of therapy.</i>
2018			Conference presentation. Society for Existential Analysis annual conference. <i>Simone de Beauvoir: existential philosophy and living with change.</i>	
2019				Existential Analysis 30.1: 80-93. <i>Simone de Beauvoir: Existential Philosophy and Human Development.</i>
2019				The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy. Ed E. van Deurzen et al. London Wiley-Blackwell Chapter co-written with H. Hayes <i>Existential-Phenomenological therapy: Philosophy and Theory. Chapter Existential-Phenomenological therapy: Method and Practice.</i> Section: New Developments
2019			Conference presentation. The Weekend University. <i>Existential Approaches To Human Development.</i>	

2020				<p>Existential Analysis 31.2. <i>Reframing Human Development Existentially: a Consideration of Some Invariant Themes.</i></p> <p>Existential Analysis 31.2 Book review. <i>Living Well and Dying Well: Tales of Counselling Older People.</i> Helen Kewell (2019)</p>
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3. Some thoughts on research and researching

Existentially, human beings are researchers, we are meaning-making creatures, and as such, we learn to distinguish between the general and the particular and look for commonality within difference.

This context statement is an enquiry into how I find things out in general, and also how I have applied what I have found to teaching and writing in particular.

Because it has unfolded and evolved over many years a bit like background music, I have not used a formal research method or had a stated research question, but it has been research nonetheless.

Writing this context statement is a rather more formal research process. It has a primary research question,

How have I learnt? and a subsidiary one,

What have I learnt?

There is also a reflexive question,

What has it been like to do this?

Because I am the researcher in common, it is inevitable that the less formal research; how I have usually found things out, will coincide with the more formal research.

On asking myself the question, '*How do I generally find things out*' a number of points stand out.

The first is that I have always started from my experience. I have not started from what I have been told or what has been received, except in the sense that I live in a world of multiple influences. I mean it in the sense that my personal responses to these influences have always been my primary guide.

This is phenomenological.

3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a way of finding out about the relationship between ourselves and the world we live in; between the subjective and the objective. It does this primarily by asking the question *What?* that elicits description, rather than the question *Why?* that elicits explanation. This description is then compared in verification to knowledge that derives from the context. In this way our understanding can be seen against a horizon; it is given perspective (Deurzen and Adams 2011/2016), and we start to see patterns and to find commonality within difference. This is then incorporated into subsequent re-description.

By being phenomenological we come to form a clearer idea of how we relate to and create our meaning world and we also come to understand the self that is created in the process of

relating. The researcher is always a participant-observer and phenomenological practice is begun and sustained with attention.

This can be shown as

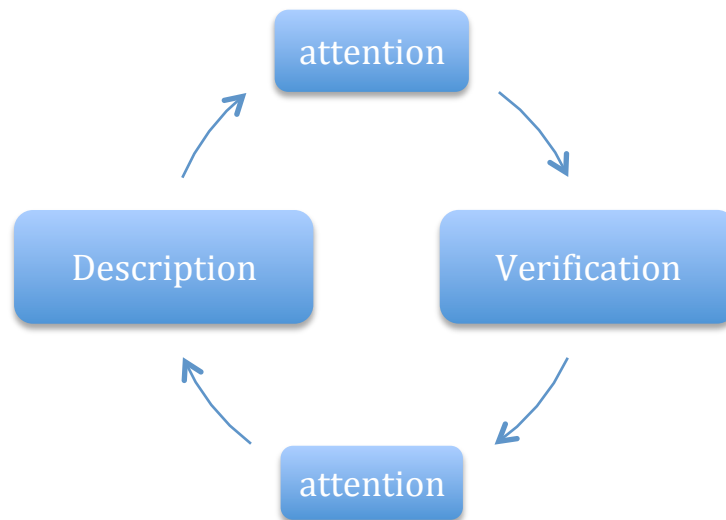


Fig.1 Phenomenology and Attention

3.2 Reflexivity

When dealing with subjective experience there needs to be a way of building in reliability so that the researcher does not just find what they want to find. Phenomenologically, the researcher's reflexivity – the double hermeneutic - is such a safeguard.

It is a feature of formal qualitative research and Willig (2001:10) defines it as '*...reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. It also involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers*'.

Schön (1987), coining the term Reflective Practice, uses it in a broader context than just formal research to refer to the way people learn about a job through working at the job.

But in a wider context than this, a distinction can be made between working phenomenologically, and living phenomenologically.

The former is when it is applied to a particular task, and the latter is when it is applied to living as a whole.

For me, phenomenology has always been more than just a therapeutic practice, more than just a research methodology, more than just a set of philosophical ideas.

It is a way of living, which is to say it is a way of researching into living.

Staying with the motifs of horizon and perspective from phenomenology, I have found that refining the skill of discerning patterns to be central to all aspects of my life and work.

3.3 Learning to read and understand

I was exposed to a lot of interesting facts at school, some of which I still remember, but far more valuable were two research skills that showed me how facts could be used rather than just remembered.

The first was simplification, or learning to *précis*, and it taught me to pick out the central theme from a passage and distinguish it from the examples, the asides and the repeats, and also to distinguish interpretation from opinion. I learnt to read critically. I also learnt to tell good writing from bad writing.

I learnt that to understand something, I needed first to *précis* it and translate it into everyday language. In this way I could understand which bits were necessary and which were not and I could build it back up to an optimum level of simplicity. I would know if the simplification had gone too far when I left was a cliché, and that it had not gone far enough when it was still opaque.

What was left needed to be descriptive, predictive and also capable of modification. This, I decided, was the mark of a good theory.

Phenomenology helped me to do this.

Out of discovering the advantages and disadvantages, the practical limits, of simplification, a question emerged,

How much simplicity is enough to clarify, and how much detail is necessary to give depth?

The challenge that applies to every project is to find this optimum.

A useful analogy is that of a map. No map can contain everything; this is its value. A map is not the same as the territory.

Our task, phenomenologically, is to try to bring into awareness the ways we are selective about how we make our personal maps, remembering that our viewpoint is only ever one viewpoint among many and that we gain from having multiple viewpoints.

In every moment of our lives we are making maps and testing them against the territory; we are always researching, learning and understanding.

A recent example of this is what I call The Existential Cycle of Authenticity (Appendix 1.1).

As well as being central to client work, simplification has been valuable for all my teaching and writing, beginning with when I was teaching a different theory each week on first level counselling courses. But when doing this I found that these courses, particularly skills courses, had a low status among psychotherapy teachers. It seemed that teachers associated these courses with not knowing very much and that their status as teachers was somehow correlated with complexity and theory. Either that or the teachers just didn't know how to teach it.

In fact, what I learnt from teaching these courses was that I was required to have a wider range and depth of knowledge than I needed for higher-level courses. In first level courses,

complex ideas had to be put across clearly and simply in a very short time to an audience that was naïve and frequently sceptical. I had to know what the key points were and also explain them in simple language.

I had to use the skills of optimum simplification.

3.4 Testing things out

I learnt the second skill doing sciences. The principle here is about knowing how to formulate and test a research question.

Both these skills, simplifying and testing, have been valuable in all my work in my professional life, from working with clients, to doing a literature review, to book reviewing, to working out both the content and the process of teaching existential skills, to writing both editions of *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* (SIECP) (2011/2016) and *A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling* (ACIEC) (2013), to thinking through all the steps between starting to teach the human development course up to the writing the final published version of *An Existential Approach to Human Development* (AEAHD) (2018) as well as writing this context statement.

3.5 Learning about learning: the Skills Learning Process

Something else I have found valuable is not a formal research method at all. But it is a research method in a reflexive sense. It tells me how the research, the learning, the finding out, is going, and the evidence is personal and experiential. I came across it in my early days of teaching and I call it the Skills Learning Process. Malone (2003) calls it Learning Stages and its origins are hard to track down but it was developed and popularized by Gordon and Burch (2003). I developed it with respect to therapeutic work (2017) (Appendix 1.2) having previously included shorter versions of it in ACIEC (2013) (Appendix 1.7) and SIECP (2016) (Appendix 1.8). One of the terms it uses, unconscious, is existentially problematic because of its psychoanalytic resonances. There seems to be no evidence that the psychoanalytic meaning was intended in the original model and I have elected to stay with the original terminology with the qualification that unconscious is meant in the everyday sense of 'not currently in conscious awareness'. Just as its companion term 'conscious' means 'currently in awareness'.

It fulfills the qualities of a good theory; it is descriptive, predictive and modifiable.

Before I talk about its value, I have been talking so far about skills but I need to distinguish between skills and techniques.

Existential therapists have long been suspicious of technique and with good reason. As Frankl says (2000: 26), '*... we can see the therapist as a technician only if we have first viewed the patient as some sort of machine*'.

The danger is that when a theoretical principle is translated into a technique - which can be done without full attention or personal commitment - all those involved, both therapists and clients, become dehumanised.

Learning skills, on the other hand, is a uniquely human quality. Skills are owned ways of being and while they will inevitably incorporate discrete interventions they do so in ways that are sensitive to context; a skilled worker chooses both when to use and how to use a particular tool. A technician does not. An action becomes a skill when we own it and make it a part of who we are, rather than just something we do. It is when we become responsible.

I am suggesting here that existential learning is a process of skills acquisition rather than technique acquisition.

The Skills Learning Process is marked by a characteristic sequence of thoughts, feelings and actions that can evolve backwards and forwards dependent on context through what can be thought of as four qualitatively different but interconnected phases. Each contains the other and the significance of the process as a whole has to be acknowledged in order that learning can be consolidated, owned and be made transferable.

Whatever the contexts, it is a model of how we learn. Because each phase evokes different thoughts and feelings in the learner, what the learner needs in order that they may persevere will be different.

Knowing where we are in the process can give us valuable feedback about the progress of our learning, for an unforeseen obstacle can send us back to the beginning and we have to start again, as in snakes and ladders. And it can feel to be just as random and punishing.

My own responses and how it felt to be at all the different stages of the writing of this context statement record the ups and downs, the dead-ends, as well as the resolutions of the research process.

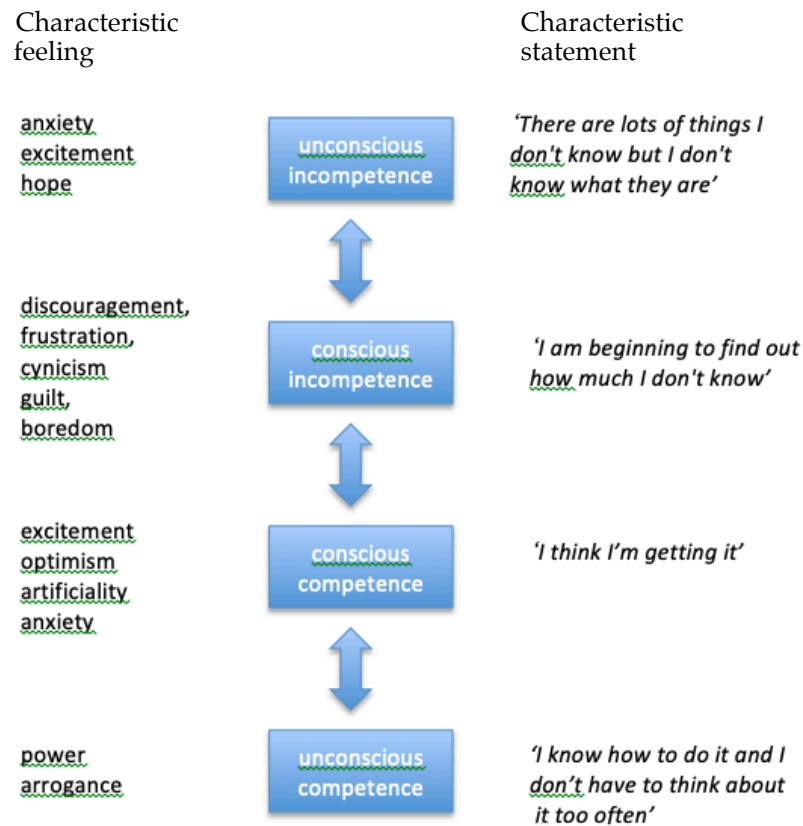
It also describes how I wrote *An Existential Approach to Human Development*. I will say more about this in due course (5.3.c p.53).

Knowing that e.g. discouragement and dead-ends are all a natural part of the learning process and not necessarily evidence of the researchers incompetence or the impossibility of the task (although that can never be discounted), can put the entire research process into perspective. The transience of feelings of incompetence as well as of feelings of competence, are all a part of the process of learning.

True research, true learning, is always an embodied and embodying experience.

The Skills Learning Process can be summarised as follows

Fig.2 The Skills Learning Process



3.6 Models of experiential learning.

I will briefly review four.

Action research was a term coined by Lewin (1946) to describe a way of researching into social issues. He conceived it as an explicitly problem solving process and it involved a spiral process of

1. data collection to determine goals,
2. action to implement goals, and
3. assessment of the result of the intervention.

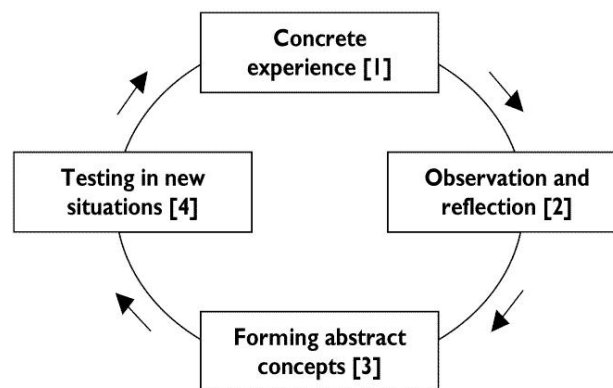
Implicit in it is a libertarian intention to question and overcome power imbalances in society by investigating the way societal structures maintain these imbalances. For Bargal (2006), its libertarian intention is based on Lewin's personal history as an immigrant to the US. This places the researcher at the centre of the research.

Lewin's work has led to number of variants. Heron's cooperative inquiry (Heron and Reason 1997) is similar to Lewin's in that it sees the researcher and participants as equal partners in the

research process. In its simplest form it is a spiral model that begins with a hypothesis. This leads to it being tested experientially and then to evaluation. The final stage is when this is used to generate a new hypothesis that is then tested.

For Kolb (1984) there is a thin line between researching and learning, and he devised a four-stage model of experiential learning, shown below.

Fig.3 Kolb's four-stage model



In this model the starting point is what he calls concrete experience. As we reflect on the experience, we start to conceptualise it in abstract terms. This leads us to forming a hypothesis, which is then tested and leads to a new experience, and so on. For Kolb, effective learning from experience can only occur if the person is engaged fully in all stages.

Another model, rather looser and simpler than Lewin's, Heron's or Kolb's is that of Schön (1987). He distinguishes between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action and they have a cyclical relationship with each other. The strength of this model, being simple, is that it can be applied to any situation that involves a person learning a skill. Argyris and Schön (1974) distinguish between single-loop learning where another strategy is sought to correct an error in a given situation, and double-loop learning, where the situation itself is examined as the origin of the error. I will return to this point later.

3.7 Moustakas Heuristic Inquiry

While all these models describe some aspects of what I have been doing, none describe it with enough acknowledgement of my context or the value of phenomenology. They do not satisfy my criterion that a theory needs to aspire to optimum simplicity while also being descriptive, predictive and capable of modification.

A research method that matches my context and question in a way that does not become clichéd or opaque is Moustakas's Heuristic Inquiry (1990).

Although it usually involves formal interviews, this is not central as long as the project involves other people in some way. This context statement, this research project, looks at teaching and writing and it could not have come about without the active involvement of other

people. Its place is in the social world where my internal world met the internal worlds of my clients, my students and my readers.

In phenomenological terms, there was continual spiral interplay between description and verification that was sustained by attention and reflexivity.

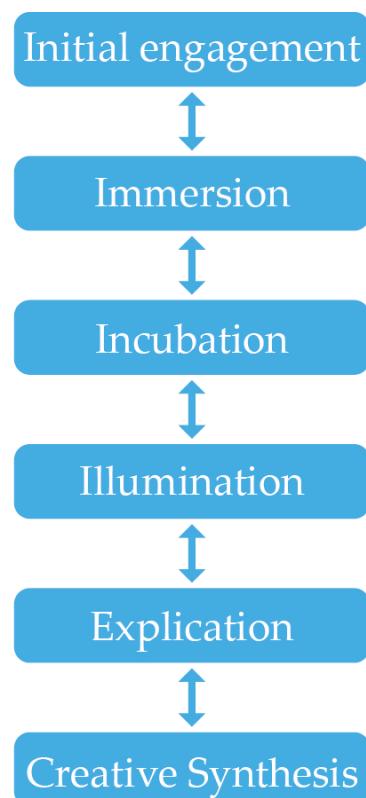
Moustakas's method also has some overlaps with the Skills Learning Process, which can be superimposed upon it. I am reluctant however to propose a visual form of this because they are two different sorts of map, not just different versions of the same map and trying to combine them would only increase opaqueness.

Moustakas says that a heuristic inquiry has to begin with a question the researcher needs to know more about. It has to be personal. In my case, the questions about existential practice and existential human development were both personal in the sense that they both mattered greatly to me.

Moustakas' inquiry has six phases and seven processes. See Appendix 3.1.

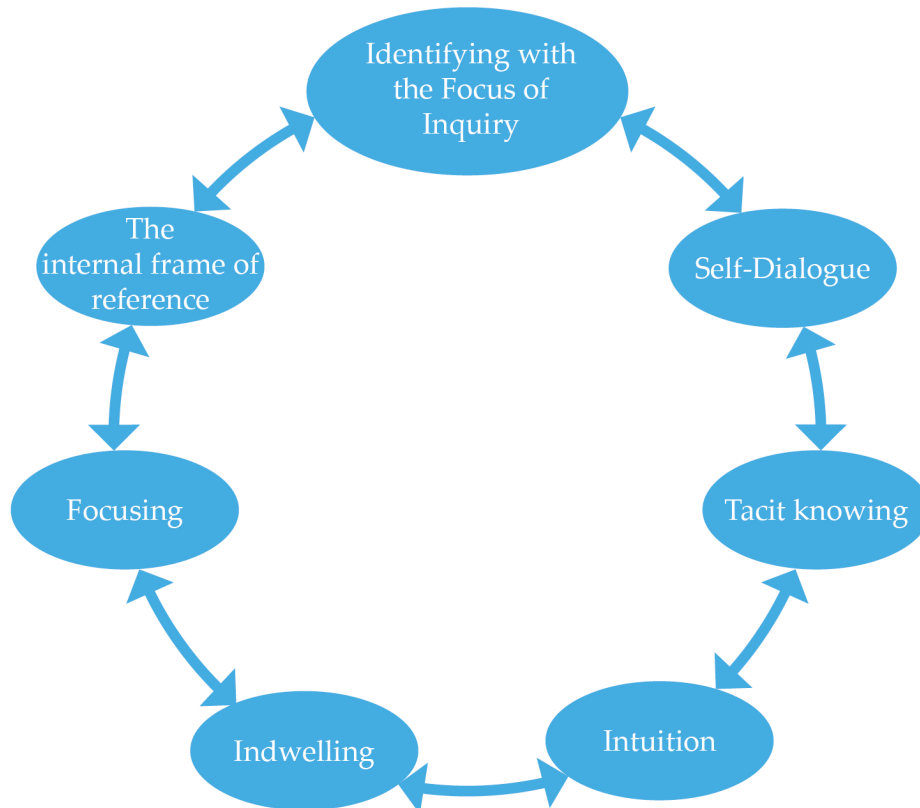
The six phases generally go in order from Initial Engagement, which is when the issue first presents itself to the researcher, to Creative Synthesis, which is when the initial personal experience is understood as something universal. Having said that, experiential research is never linear, and different phases may well be revisited in a spiral manner each time with a different meaning. Loosening the tie to linearity a bit more, they might also be called dimensions.

Fig.4 Moustakas' six phases (after Sultan 2018)



The seven processes are different ways of engaging with the question and can be approached in any order and with differing degrees of intensity and can all be used to intensify the meaning of each of the six phases. I have put them in a circle to reinforce their non-linearity.

Fig.5 Moustakas' seven processes (after Sultan 2018)



Although I had been previously exposed to Moustakas' method, it did not resonate with me until now. Maybe it was taught badly or maybe I was not able to see its application outside of a specific formal research project. But as a result of doing this context statement and stepping back and seeing my work as a whole I can see it as a description of

- how I usually learn
- how I taught the course that led on to *An Existential Approach to Human Development*
- how I wrote *An Existential Approach to Human Development*
- how I have written this context statement

From time to time I will track the way the six phases and the seven processes thread their way through the rest of this context statement and conclude with a Creative Synthesis.

4. Learning about learning: a personal journey

This context statement is a review of my public works in the last five years. But without a historical context these works could not be understood.

In this chapter I clarify this historical context.

On deciding how to title this section I first thought of my learning as a sort of apprenticeship. It reminded me of a book given to me some 40 years ago by a good friend who also subsequently became a psychotherapist. She was the first of my peers to die, of cancer. She also wrote about this (Jeffries 2000). In this book, the author (Moser 1977) described his training psychoanalysis as an apprenticeship. My apprenticeship, though, has felt much longer and less defined than his. Also, there was something about it that made me uneasy.

The word itself is derived from the Latin *apprehendere* that meant 'to take hold of, grasp' and Trench (1856: 81) notes the difference between apprehension and comprehension pointing out that we '*apprehend many truths which we do not comprehend*'. We can know many things without fully understanding them. They are Tacit.

There are three points I want to draw out of this.

Firstly, I see my development, my learning, as being essentially experiential and that what training courses do, or at least should do, is to provide opportunities for such learning to occur. The learner has to be active, not passive.

Secondly, I have learnt from everyone I have come into contact with, not just the 'masters'. The apprentice-master model assumes there is a fixed body of knowledge to be learnt. And the master has learnt it. I have never and still do not consider that I have learnt all there is. I am still learning. Moustakas' phases and processes are life-long.

Thirdly, as said, learning skills is a process. On many occasions I thought I understood something, only to discover later that my understanding was only partial and also rather superficial. We are always approaching comprehension but never attaining it.

So, remembering Kierkegaard's words earlier, what was it that I was being apprenticed, or apprenticing myself, to do or to be? It was certainly not planned in the sense that I knew from an early age what I wanted to be or do. And yet, I can see threads that wove themselves together and contributed to my public works of the last five years. My use of the passive voice in the last sentence is deliberate because this is the way it seems looking back. At the time though, there was nothing obvious about it at all, neither did I have much of a plan. This did not bother me; if I had a plan at all it was simply to do the things that interested me and to stop doing the things that didn't interest me.

4.1 Beginning at the beginning.

I was born, the youngest of three, into a family of teachers. And yet this is not quite true because teaching was secondary to what they did. My mother was an artist, and my father was a craftsman. I grew up exposed to the possibility that things could, and probably should, be made, and moreover that the process of such transformation was personally satisfying. Having said that, academic achievement was valued more than practical achievement.

But I also developed a view, that eventually led to my public works of the last five years, that whenever I was told that something '*could not be done*', I needed to find out for myself whether it could and if not why not. I needed to find out whether there was another way. I wanted to test things out.

Being the youngest had advantages. My siblings had made it, so the bar was not just lowered for me, it was removed. This gave me the freedom to explore my own interests in my own way.

After school, I did a psychology degree rather than pursuing an art training. Like many people, then and since, I was naïve in that I thought I would learn something about how both myself and other people 'worked'. I didn't know and I needed to know. If I found out, I thought, life would be easier. Psychology seemed a good place to start. The degree, however, was in experimental psychology and was underpinned by behaviourism and statistical analysis but through this I learnt how inappropriate natural science was for investigating the nature of human beings and human Being. Not finding the course material very inspiring, I spent much of my time reading fiction and philosophy. R.D. Laing (1965, 1967, 1968) was my introduction to phenomenology, existentialism and psychotherapy. As it turned out, he also introduced me to a different way of teaching.

Fiction and particularly drama, talked to me, both then and now, about the issues of everyday life, or as I later came to term it, the human striving for meaning and purpose in an indifferent universe. I enjoyed drama at school but found the spotlight of being on stage too frightening. Plays were human interactions stripped down to the bare necessities; the dialogue and only as much context as was necessary to give it meaning and not so much as to destroy the ambiguity. Above all there was rarely a narrator telling me what was going on. There were just the different voices. Reading and watching plays, I realise now, was a good training for what was to become my future career of psychotherapist, teacher and writer.

Meanwhile, the course demanded that the content of the textbooks be remembered and repeated; they were writers' books, masters' books. Above all, the course used what Freire (1972) calls the banking method of education where the teacher's job was to deposit knowledge into the passive student. He said that the implicit power differential between teacher and student promoted oppression and stifled initiative and personal agency. This was certainly my experience both at school and at university.

On the other hand, the novels I read were readers' books. They could be engaged with.

I also discovered that bad writing stifled personal learning and that good writing facilitated personal learning.

4.2 The Northgate Clinic

After the psychology degree I embarked on becoming a clinical psychologist. So to back up my application I worked as a Nursing Assistant (later renamed Social Therapist) at an in-patient adolescent psychiatric clinic, The Northgate Clinic, now sadly closed, which was associated with the Tavistock Clinic. I knew nothing about the work, it was barely covered on my degree, but it looked interesting. It was a lot more than interesting. It was valuable and pivotal in so many ways. It was also unique.

The clinic was run in a way that seemed effortless at the time but in fact was extremely sophisticated and demanded enormous maturity, trust and openness from everyone. It was clear that the Medical Director was in charge, but it was just as clear that everyone's opinion mattered and needed to be taken into account if the place was to be run therapeutically. Overall the clinic was a model of cooperation, of how there could be freedom within structure, and structure within freedom.

This was an entirely new model of learning. And different in every possible way from the banking method.

The model at the clinic acknowledged that both staff and patients learnt from each other, but in different ways. This also demystified psychotherapy for me. I saw it working and became a part of it working. I was certainly not expecting this. Also I do not remember any technical terms ever being used in any of the case discussions I was a part of. Interpretations when made were never used to reinforce power or status or to mystify. I took this as normal and did not think any more about it until I started my own training when I discovered that other people did things differently. Nevertheless I had found that there was another way.

I left there having learnt two things about my future.

4.3 Psychoanalysis

The first was that I did not want to be a psychologist, but most of all of all I learnt that I needed to have my own psychotherapy to sort out some personal issues that were just not sorting themselves out. Life was not getting much easier. I had learnt that the answers I needed were not going to be found in books, in any books. These issues were, in abstract terms, to do with the relationship between structure and freedom in close intimate relationships and had to be looked at, and in the therapeutic language I was later to discover, they had to be worked through.

More importantly, I learnt that whatever I did and however I decided to live, it would have to enable freedom and structure to co-exist.

I was in psychoanalysis for about seven years. For me it had the right balance of freedom and structure. As in the clinic, my analyst never used any technical terms. I was able to work things out for myself, in company. Everything else in my life had to wait until it had run its course, whenever that may be and whatever that may be.

I learnt that the relationship between freedom and structure is not an either/or relationship. It is a both/and relationship. Structure gives meaning by providing context. And we are always in a context. More than this though, the right kind of structure can allow the freedom to be used, but the wrong kind of structure can constrain or even distort freedom.

I was struck on many occasions by the way space was given by silence. There were many times when neither of us spoke. I discovered that there was never nothing going on. Although the word silence can imply emptiness and absence, our silences were never empty; they were fertile spaces that had metaphorical presence. They were filled with tacit thoughts and feelings that were waiting for the right time to be spoken and understood. My analyst was happy, I assumed, to wait and see what came up. My assumption was never shown to be misplaced. I did not find the freedom of our shared contemplative space problematic as the way we got on, our relational pattern, the mutual trust, provided the necessary structure.

I felt I had discovered something about what I needed, and by extrapolation, what I thought other people needed to thrive. It was personal, but I didn't yet know if it was universal. I knew what sort of structure I needed, but this was not necessarily the same as knowing what sort other people needed. That still had to be discovered.

Without realising it, I was embodying the phenomenological principle of what I later knew as getting as close as possible to 'the things themselves' as the philosopher Edmund Husserl put it. In Moustakas's terms, this was Immersion. Whatever theorising had to be done, the language should be, as Laing (1967: 15) said, as experience-near as possible.

4.4 Youth and Community Work

Instead of becoming a psychologist I became a Youth and Community Worker. I always knew was unsuited to the work but it also made few demands on me and allowed me to concentrate on my analysis and my art practice. While there were fewer power imbalances - whether the young people came to the Youth Club was entirely their choice, and they usually came to meet each other and not me - the structure was imposed by management without consultation. This by-passing of my autonomy reinforced my need to leave. My analysis complete, I returned to my initial interest and trained as a counsellor. No artists I knew were making a living, so that wasn't an option.

4.5 Learning to teach counselling and psychotherapy

If I learnt most about being a psychotherapist from my time as a client, I learnt how to teach psychotherapy from two sources.

The first, as a model of how not to do it, was my counselling training.

My first training was entirely student led. The tutor did very little. He probably interpreted Friere rather too literally. There was no syllabus beyond what we decided it should be, but we never agreed on what it should be. There was too much freedom and too little structure. The silence of no structure just got filled up with noise. I learnt almost nothing except that

maximum freedom and minimum structure did not work. My second training, five years later, an MA, was also thin on content and structure. Fortunately, I knew how to make my own structure.

Nevertheless, by this time I felt I had picked up enough to know how to do it better. Also, by this time, the spotlight seemed more attractive than frightening.

The second source was teaching for the Central School of Counselling and Therapy (CSCT), which I did from 1989 to 1998. Each course had a tutor guide and a student guide and both described the curriculum session-by-session. The tutor handbook described the content and made suggestions for how to run the session. This gave me the right balance of freedom and structure. The course guides were particularly useful to me because my knowledge of counselling skills from my experience as a psychoanalytic client was of a different order, apprehended but not as yet comprehended. In Moustakas' terms it was Tacit.

I started by using the exercises in the tutor guide and found that some worked better than others. I soon realised it was because the instructions were either unclear or too complicated. I gradually abandoned them and developed my own. These worked better because I knew what I wanted them to do. In developing an exercise I had to précis the theory, and then had to ask the question,

What is it like to be aware of the influence of.... [the id, or an archetype, or empathy etc. etc. etc].

The important part of that sequence for me both then and now is that I was not asking the question 'Why...?' because that would only lead to a 'Because...' answer. This latter question did not interest me. I wanted to stay experience-near. I was asking a question that in one way is much simpler, but in another way is far more complex, I was asking, 'What is it like...'.

I was later to discover that this was the fundamental phenomenological question. Describe don't explain. I was a phenomenologist without knowing it.

The way the exercises were used on these courses enabled the metaphorical silence to be filled with contemplative thought that could lead to new learning.

Above all, I discovered that when designing exercises, clear instructions were non-negotiable necessities. But, and this was the tricky bit, the instructions must not be so prescriptive as to reduce the freedom of the student to find themselves within the exercise, nor too ambiguous as to lose focus.

Freedom and structure again, but together, balanced.

Some exercises I invented for one occasion only, in response to the needs of the group, but most evolved every time I used them. I refer to two particular exercises in Appendix 3.2 and 3.3.

4.6 Learning to write about counselling and psychotherapy

I was also beginning to write book reviews. Again, this was an area where I learnt by doing as no guidelines were ever given. The principle I went on was simply,

'If I was to read a review of this book, what would I need to know?'

I learnt that book reviews are a subtle genre that require great skill to do well, and that this is

generally unappreciated. It led eventually to becoming Book Reviews editor at *Existential Analysis* from 2007 to 2017 but of course, I was not to know this at the time. I still had nothing particular I wanted to say. I was just immersing myself in the things I was interested in.

For my third, psychotherapy, training I chose existentialism because by this time I had not found the world of psychoanalysis as open as my experience of it had been at the clinic or in my analysis. I wanted a training that was less theory driven and more experience driven, allowed me freedom of thought and was not so factionalised. The existential perspective seemed to offer this. The Advanced Diploma in Existential Psychotherapy (ADEP) at Regents College, later Regents University (RUL) was strong on content and structure, but the teaching method, with one exception, was the banking method.

Moreover, what we were taught about the principles of existentialism and phenomenology did not match with the way we were taught. This was puzzling and disappointing.

There had to be another way.

I was learning how to teach and how to write, and existentialism and phenomenology would help me to find something to say.

5. My public works

In this chapter I will be talking about my public works in terms of

- their origin
- what I think of them now
- to what extent it could be said that they achieved their aim
- their impact and influence

I am going to start with two early pieces of public writing. Although these were clearly not written within the five year window, their effect is, as I explain.

Then I will talk about my teaching and writing about the theory and practice of Existential-Phenomenological Therapy that culminated in the first and second editions of *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* (SIECP) (2011/2016), *A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling* (ACIEC) (2013) and contributing to *The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy* (WWH) (2019).

Following this I will talk about my teaching and writing that culminated in my book *An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives* (AEAHD) (2018) and contributing to *Case Studies in Existential Therapy: Translating theory into practice* (2018)

Lastly I will talk about my work as book reviews editor (2007 – 2017), and then co-editor of the journal *Existential Analysis* (2017 – present).

5.1 Two early pieces of writing

Timeline

Date	Title	Publication	Appendix
1973/1995	<i>Reflections on 'Reflections on Meditation'</i>	North East London Polytechnic student union magazine (1973) and Society for Existential Analysis newsletter (1995)	Appendix 1.3
1998	<i>Ronnieism - a pathological condition or an existential given?</i>	Society for Existential Analysis newsletter	Appendix 1.4

5.1.a Reflections on 'Reflections on Meditation' (Appendix 1.3)

This is a review of a talk given by R.D. Laing in 1973 that I wrote when I was a psychology undergraduate and it was published first in a Student Union magazine. Although I enjoyed writing it, I was not tempted to write anything else. I did not know any writers; writing was what other people did. I also didn't have much to say and I have no memory of its impact in 1973. It is more like an entry in a personal journal, except that I also thought someone else may enjoy reading it. It was light relief from the uninspiring course work.

However, what is more important is the impact it has had on me up until the present day.

Firstly, I find it has the same immediacy of style that I would come to use much later in my teaching and in my writing, particularly my book reviews. This style was not possible for the course work.

Secondly, with respect to the content of Laing's talk, I realise that I had understood it better than I thought at the time. One point I picked out was that he asked,

'...how can anyone expect to understand anything, particularly social situations, without first understanding that which does the understanding'.

This line, that I later understood as the double hermeneutic, clearly stuck with me and I incorporated it 30 years later into my teaching of phenomenology and existential practice. I included it in SIECP 1e (2011: 40), SIECP 2e (2016: 47), ACIEC (2013: 51), WWH (2019: 168) and AEAHD (2018: 15) (Appendix 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.13).

This understanding, or maybe it was an apprehending, remained dormant; Tacit.

Thirdly, something else that remained Tacit was the way he talked. I wrote that

'His argument is carefully stated in steps. The only thing is, he misses out steps here and there, the ending here, an intermediary step there. [...] The idea of course is to get people to think it through for themselves and to work it out for themselves. He has no time for those who won't do this'.

He was quite deliberately non-linear. He demanded full attention from his listeners. He expected them to work; to be active, not passive.

Regardless, I'm sure, of the audience's antipathy towards the banking method of education - this was after all why we were all there - the way he talked did not go down well with the audience. They still seemed to demand the banking method from him. But he was in no mood to compromise.

It was different way of teaching.

I was, and still am, impressed with that and I try to incorporate elements of it into my own teaching.

5.1.b Ronnieism - a pathological condition or an existential given? (Appendix 1.4)

This was written in 1998 for the Society for Existential Analysis newsletter, which had a print run of about 400 copies. I wrote it after a conference on *'The Legacy of R.D. Laing'* as a response to

the way Laing was being remembered and talked about nine years after his death. It was about the effect of Laing's charisma on those who knew him. I called it Ronnieism after the people who referred to him as 'Ronnie' to suggest a greater familiarity with him and a greater authority over what he really meant. People who had not met him simply called him 'Laing'.

It was also a piece that I remember not just being enjoyable to write but also a piece that had a serious intent. I had something to say, at least for that moment.

Its impact on me now is like the previous piece, as an entry of a personal journal that was coincidentally written for public consumption. I never used the ideas again although I refer to charisma twice in AEAHD (Appendix 1.13).

However, the reason for including it here is its influence and impact on others; that we rarely know what effect we have.

In 2016, some 18 years after its publication I was contacted by Haya Oakley. She explained that she was researching the early years of the Philadelphia Association, which was founded in 1965 by R. D. Laing and colleagues in order to challenge established ways of thinking about and treating mental distress. She recalled reading my article in 1998 and asked if I had a copy I could send her. She subsequently referenced my main points in her paper (Oakley 2017).

The wider point echoes what Yalom (2008: 83) calls rippling. He says that

'Rippling refers to the fact that each of us creates – often without our conscious intent or knowledge – concentric circles of influence that may affect others for years, even for generations'.

While may wish for our work to have an impact but we cannot demand or prescribe what it will be or when it will be. All we can do is act in accordance with our beliefs, act as Kierkegaard says, with faith, in as straightforward way as we can.

In the case of this piece, its influence stretched across some 20 years to the present day.

5.2 Existentialism and Therapeutic Practice

In the charts below, the work in the last five years is in **bold**

Teaching and conferences

Date	Institution	Title
1997 - 2017	New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, London (NSPC)	Teaching and course development of the module Existential Practice
2000	Conference presentation. Society for Existential Analysis annual conference.	<i>Practicing Phenomenology: some Reflections and Considerations</i>
2013	Two lectures at Södertörn University, Stockholm,	<i>The phenomenological method applied to existential counselling and therapy.</i>
2015	World Congress for Existential Therapy, London	<i>Existential Therapy As A Skills Learning Process.</i>

Writing

Date	Title	Publication/ Publisher	Appendix
2001	<i>Practising Phenomenology: some reflections and considerations</i>	Existential Analysis 12.1. 65 – 84	Appendix 1.5
2002	<i>Reflections on Reflection</i>	Existential Analysis 13.2: 204 - 213	
2005	Ch. 9: <i>Death</i> (co-written with Mick Cooper).	Existential Perspectives on Human Issues: A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice eds. van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker	
2009	<i>Phenomenology and Supervision</i>	Existential Perspectives on Supervision ed. E. van Deurzen and Young. Chapter. London: Palgrave.	
2011	<i>Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy 1e</i> (co-written with E. van Deurzen)	Sage Publications	Appendix 1.6
2013	<i>A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling</i>	Sage Publications	Appendix 1.7
2013	Ch. 15: <i>Working with Relationship Violence and Abuse</i> . Co-written with Mark Jepson	Existential Perspectives on Relationship Therapy Deurzen E van and Iacovou S (eds) (2013) London: Palgrave.	
2016	<i>Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy 2e</i> (co-written with E. van Deurzen)	Sage Publications	Appendix 1.8
2016	<i>Existential Therapy As A Skills Learning Process.</i>	Existential Analysis 27.1: 58 – 69	Appendix 1.1
2019	Ch. 8 <i>Existential-Phenomenological therapy: Philosophy and Theory.</i> (co-written with H. Hayes). Ch. 9 <i>Existential-Phenomenological therapy: Method and Practice.</i> Ch.12 <i>Challenges and New Developments</i>	The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy. Ed E. van Deurzen et al. London Wiley-Blackwell	Appendix 1.9

5.2.a Origins

When I started as a student on the Advanced Diploma in Existential Psychotherapy (ADEP) I had been teaching generic counselling skills for eight years. I was curious to find out what existential practice was and how they taught it.

I immediately encountered considerable scepticism about whether there were such things as existential skills at all. This baffled me. I thought there must be; that's what I was there to find out.

I also discovered that existential practitioners were reluctant to talk about what they actually did, citing the existential principles of freedom and autonomy. Existentialists do not like '*How to...*' books. When I pressed for an answer, I was told that there was no particular way of doing existential therapy and that '*anything goes in existential therapy*'. This seemed to me to be a recipe for theoretical confusion and for therapeutic and ethical disaster.

The dominant model of existential practice at that time was that proposed by Spinelli (1989). It was alleged to be clear, but to me it was opaque and it also said nothing about skills. It was as if good practice just happened by itself.

In addition, beyond working in triads, there was no clear rationale about what was supposed to be learnt in the triads. Freedom and little structure.

As I read further into existential philosophy and phenomenology I realised that while Spinelli's (1989) model had some phenomenological origins, it was based on descriptive phenomenology, which is closer to the humanistic tradition, and that existential philosophy was closer to hermeneutic phenomenology. This seemed to me to be part of the problem.

There had to be another way.

I resolved to work on devising a model of existential practice closer to hermeneutic phenomenology and also to work out a way of teaching it.

5.2.b Teaching existential practice

My first step was when, having completed the ADEP, I started teaching the Existential Practice module at the NSPC. This continued until 2017.

I began by following the existing session-by-session guidelines and gradually made them my own. At the next revalidation cycle I re-wrote the course to reflect more accurately what I had been doing.

Reflections on the teaching process

The way I taught the module drew on many years of skills teaching and many more years of understanding the relationship between freedom and structure.

The principles I applied were that,

- there were discrete phenomenological interventions that were consistent with existential therapy,
- these interventions could be learnt,
- in order for them to be learnt all the tasks need to be cumulative, simple and unambiguous and the rationale for them must be clearly stated. Having said that, they must not be so rigid as to undermine student's autonomy and responsibility, and
- freedom and structure needed to be operationalised to create a contemplative space whereby learning through action could be facilitated. This is closer to what we know as the Socratic method. I will return to this point when I talk about teaching the Human Development course.

Appendix 3.5 contains the course outline.

Appendix 3.6 contains a detailed account and discussion of how I ran the module.

Appendix 3.7 contains guidelines I give on how to write the self-development essay.

Appendix 3.8 contains guidelines I give about suggestions for the talkers in the triad groups.

Appendix 3.9 contains guidelines I give on feedback in triad groups.

Appendix 3.10 contains guidelines I give on reviewing learning at the end of the course.

Appendix 3.2 contains a detailed account and discussion of an exercise on names *I* use at the start of the course.

Impact and Evidence

I will address this in two ways.

- i. How I came to be involved with the NSPC, and
- ii. The impact I made on the students who took the course.

i. Involvement in the NSPC.

The assessors of the draft context statement requested that I *'hold a conversation/interview with Emmy van Deurzen to reflect on and evidence [the] impact' [of my public works]*

In this conversation, she notes that (Appendix 2.1: 55-57) that from the beginning she wanted the NSPC to be *'a learning community'* where *'...we wouldn't just talk about existential phenomenological practice'* and she goes on to acknowledge (Appendix 2.1: 58-60) that from what she knew of me, that I was open to that way of working.

It was with this coincidence of intention that I started teaching the existential practice module at the NSPC.

ii. Student evaluations

- At the end of each module, students are requested to complete, anonymously, an assessment form about the course. This form had six categories that students were asked to score on a scale of 1 to 9. It also had a section where comments could be left. The scores are all between 8 and 9, and the comments pick out both my practical approach to the work as well as my facilitative presence. See Appendix 2.3a.

- Darren Langdridge, Professor of Psychology and Sexuality at the Open University, and writer on existential issues (e.g. 2013), was a student on the course some time before the five year window but he notes in 2020 (Appendix 2.5), that my teaching about existential practice and also about phenomenology has an important and enduring influence on his work as a therapist and also as a writer.

5.2.c. Writing about existential practice

5.2.c.1 Practising Phenomenology: some reflections and considerations (2001)

As a result of learning from teaching at the NSPC I published my emerging ideas in 2001 (Appendix 1.5).

My paper had three strands, one was my objection to the view that '*anything goes in existential therapy practice*', another was to remind existential therapists that phenomenology was a formal and systematic research method, and lastly that the dominant model was opaque and misrepresented phenomenology.

Reflections on the writing process

I had some particular things to say and I wanted to say them. I was also aware that much of what I was saying went against the orthodox view. At the time, I did not imagine my ideas being translated into a book; I was content with teaching the course.

Impact and Evidence

The reaction I got was as I predicted. It showed up a fault line that I was aware of and still exists in the UK between those existential therapists that lean towards a more descriptive phenomenology (Spinelli) and those who lean towards a more hermeneutic, existential phenomenology (Deurzen). I was clear where I stood.

Emmy van Deurzen refers to this in my conversation with her (Appendix 2.1: 82-84).

5.2.c.2 Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy (2011 / 2016)

For some years, Sage had been asking Emmy van Deurzen to write a book on Existential Skills, and because of the above reasons, she asked me to co-author *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy*. It was part of a series that had a house style that included exercises, questions, sentence completion tasks, case illustrations and key points, making it closer to my teaching style.

In the 2nd edition, we also included substantial on-line content, including live interviews.

Reflections on the writing process.

In both editions I had been able to say everything that had been occurring to me, incubating, over the years since my first paper.

Given the differences in medium, I was pleased with the way my teaching translated into writing.

We wrote both editions of SIECP by brainstorming the likely contents and then collating this into chapters that we divided between us to write and then sent drafts to each other for comments and alterations. With respect to my specific influence on the content, she says, (Appendix 2.1: 180-192) that writing together felt very natural. So much so that there *'was a strange feeling of plaiting of ideas'* such that even now she is not sure who wrote which part. This is also my feeling.

The second edition gave us the opportunity to adjust the material and add some sections. One of these was a greatly strengthened section on phenomenology, and this made our approach even more distinctive. She refers to this too (Appendix 2.1: 207-209).

We added two new chapters, *Applications of Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* and *Professional Issues and Challenges*.

At the same time as writing SIECP 2e I was starting to write AEAHD and this allowed me to include the Skills Learning Process, referred to in chapter 3 (see also Appendix 1.2). I also wrote a section on *Working with people at either end of the life span* that had particular relevance to human development. It drew on my own emerging awareness not just of human development but also of the prevalence of ageism in therapeutic practice.

Translating experience into writing was also an issue with the case illustrations. The question, as always, bearing in mind issues of confidentiality, is where should the material come from? If the material is taken directly from everyday life, it gains immediacy but this is compromised by considerations of client confidentiality. If it is entirely invented, it can easily take on a didactic quality that makes it unconvincing.

For the illustrations that I wrote, my solution was to use experiences of my own, either in everyday life or as a client, rather than as a therapist. This enabled me to use verbatim to get some immediacy and also to get round the confidentiality issue. I just changed the pronoun 'I' to 'he' and on some occasions to 'she'.

Another point worth noting here about the writing is that I found I could not easily switch from writing about theory, to writing the case illustration that brought it alive. I needed a gap of time doing something different in order to make the necessary switch. I discovered the two sorts of writing were entirely different. One, more formal, more academic. The other, more informal, more immediate.

Impact and Evidence

Emmy van Deurzen has been reluctant to write a book like SIECP because she thought it might be *'cheapening existential-phenomenological therapy by turning it into a skills based thing'* (Appendix 2.1: 214).

But when I asked her whether this had happened she said (Appendix 2.1: 226-236). *'No, far from it. What the Skills book has done is to make existential therapy more accessible [...] without diluting existential therapy and that [...] many people use that book in preference to other books because it is most*

concrete'.

The book clearly filled a gap. The endorsements (Appendix 2.8a), and reviews (Appendix 2.9a) of the first edition were positive and it sold so well (Appendix 2.11) that Sage requested a second edition (2016) (Appendix 1.8). There were also 24, 4 and 5 star reviews on Amazon for both editions (Appendix 2.9a,c).

It helped to consolidate and re-position the existential therapeutic perspective, which was becoming more widely taught and talked about, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to be a part of this re-positioning. Both editions have been translated into a number of other languages (Appendix 2.10).

5.2.c.3 A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling (2013)

On the strength of the first edition of SIECP, Sage asked me to write a more introductory book. This became *A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling* (ACIEC).

Although it was shorter, I was able to include a section on the Skills Learning Process that I had used to great effect in my teaching (Appendix 1.2).

Another addition was a fuller version of the misunderstandings I had encountered, of which '*anything goes in existential therapy practice*' was one.

A third addition was a chapter on working with different issues.

Reflections on the writing process.

In writing ACIEC I felt freer to say what I wanted to say in the way I wanted to say it. It was more personal.

The word count of ACIEC did not allow for the same solution to the problem of case illustrations. Also, I had never found case illustrations that were written in hindsight very convincing because this is just not the way life is. We never know what is going to happen. In this illustration I wanted to treat it as if it was happening in real time and not say anything that I didn't currently know. I wanted to stay true to Kierkegaard's principle that there is no point from which a final view can be taken. I wanted to keep alive a sense of ambiguity and of a life, a relationship, unfolding. I wanted the reader to find some space within the words, between the words, that they could move around in. I didn't want to just tell the reader, I wanted to involve the reader.

My solution was to have one long illustration at the beginning that I could refer back to as the book developed. This meant that I needed to invent the story of a therapeutic relationship from beginning to end and make it realistic. This stretched my writing even more into something approaching a fictional style than it was in SIECP.

At the end of every chapter I included a list of key points and further reading.

The book demanded that I be concise without being superficial. Authoritative without being authoritarian, or as we said in SIECP (2016: 80), direct without being directive. And all the time, providing a structured space for the reader to feel free enough move around in and make their

own. After almost every sentence, I would ask myself, *'Is this exactly what I mean, could it be put better?'* In many cases yes it could, and usually shorter. The principle I applied was, as said, was *How much simplicity is enough to clarify, and how much detail is necessary to give depth.*

Comparing SIECP with ACIEC now it feels more like I was 'writing' in SIECP, and that I was 'talking' in ACIEC. I was using my own voice, rather than being part of a shared, slightly anonymised voice. Whereas with SIECP my primary audience would have been my co-writer and my secondary audience would have been the readers of the book, with ACIEC my primary audience was the readers of the book.

In writing this I also find that I am reluctant to use the word 'write', preferring the less formal and more experience-near performative word 'talk'. And that talking requires attentive listeners.

When writing I always have a live audience in mind whose (imagined) responses I continually monitor. There are basically three different groups of people in my audience.

The first is understanding and is supportive of what I am trying to say.

The second is sceptical and critical of what I am saying and therefore of my philosophical position.

The third is interested and curious but not particularly knowledgeable.

The first group can be critical, but in a helpful way.

I doubt I will ever convince the second group but at least if I can provide a coherent argument the individuals may go away thinking that I am on to something.

The third group is open to what I am saying but I can't make any assumptions about what they already know. I have to explain what I mean as clearly as I can in everyday language but without being simplistic.

Something else that makes this book more personal is the cover. It is rare that writers have much influence over the cover of their books. The writer is just the person who writes the words between the covers. But this is a narrow view of the word 'write'. The cover is just as much 'written' as the words. Choices are made, decisions are taken. The cover of ACIEC is based on a design of my own. See Appendix 3.21 for the story of this.

Impact and Evidence

What has been its overall impact? This is something that a writer can never really know. A public piece of writing may get some feedback, but usually not very much. The only option is to write it in good faith and then set it on its journey on its own, a bit like a message in a bottle.

Unsolicited and/or anonymous reviews are valuable and all reviews are in Appendix 2.9b.

Encouragingly, it was reviewed in *Existential Analysis* by a reviewer who understood what I was trying to do with the case illustration (Appendix 2.9b).

It has sold slowly but steadily since it came out and shows no sign of slowing down (Appendix 2.11). There have not been many citations in other works but I would not expect this as it was a book written for beginners, and beginners do not write for publication.

It is used as a main reference on the training run by the Existential Academy of Istanbul and will soon be published in Turkish (Appendix 2.10b).

The writer and psychotherapist Meg John Barker, formerly of the Open University, who endorsed the book when it came out (Appendix 2.8b), says in 2020 (Appendix 2.6) that in their judgement my books are valuable for both experienced and inexperienced practitioners.

5.2.c.4 The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy. ed. E. van Deurzen et al. (2019)

Chapter 8 co-written with H. Hayes. *Existential-Phenomenological therapy: Philosophy and Theory*.

Chapter 9. *Existential-Phenomenological therapy: Method and Practice*.

Chapter 12. Section. *New developments*.

I was asked to write two chapters (one co-written) and part of a section for *The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy* that came out of the 2015 World Congress for Existential Therapy (Appendix 1.9).

The book is a summary of all the variations of Existential Therapy across the world with contributions written by 60 authoritative and representative writers.

As such, it is a primary source.

Reflections on the writing process.

Writing these chapters was an opportunity to legitimise my perspective on existential practice in a world context. Being a chapter in the section on the UK perspective meant that I had to not only summarise my position that I had done in SIECP and ACIEC, but also compare and contrast it with Spinelli's (1989, 2015) versions.

It meant that I had to find a way to put across a body of knowledge that I did not feel very sympathetic to, but also without showing that I had a preference. I was representing the breadth of the UK positions, not just my own position. The value of this is acknowledged by Emmy van Deurzen (Appendix 2.1: 242-250)

Impact and Evidence

The world impact of this book is hard to assess so soon after publication. Also, it is hard to find someone qualified enough to review it, as most of the potential reviewers are also contributors. It was reviewed favourably in Existential Analysis 32.1.

5.3 Existentialism and Human Development

Teaching and conferences

In the time line below the work in the last five years is in **bold**

Date	Title	Publication	Appendix
2004 – present	New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, London (NSPC)	Design and teach the module Life Span Psychology	Appendix 3.13,14,15,16,17,18
2009	Sociedade Portuguesa de Psicoterapia Existential. (Portuguese Society for Existential Psychotherapy) Lisbon	Design and teach 'The Human Life Span – an Existential Phenomenological approach'.	
2009 -2013	Regents University, London (RUL)	Design and teach the module Existential Human Development	
2012	The 8th Forum of the International Federation of Daseinsanalysis, Budapest	<i>Human Development from an Existential Phenomenological Perspective.</i>	
2013	Existence and Psychotherapy: Existential perspectives for an efficient therapeutic practice. Karpathos, Greece	<i>What does it mean to think existentially about human development?</i>	
2015	World Congress for Existential Therapy, London. Two presentations	1. From Birth to Retirement and Beyond: Towards An Existential Model of Human Development Through the Life Span 2.Round table discussion. Time, Death and Development through the Life-Span	
2016	NSPC at 20 years Conference	<i>Existential Therapy and Human Development</i>	
2018	Society for Existential Analysis annual conference	<i>Simone de Beauvoir: existential philosophy and living with change.</i>	
2019	The Weekend University	<i>Existential Approaches To Human Development</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxJyX9F1x3s

Writing

Date	Title	Publication	Appendix
2006	<i>Towards an Existential Phenomenological theory of Human Development</i>	Existential Analysis 17.2	Appendix 1.10
2013	<i>Human Development from an Existential Phenomenological Perspective: Some Thoughts and Considerations</i>	Existential Analysis 24.1	Appendix 1.11
2014	<i>Human development and</i>	Counselling Psychology	Appendix 1.12

	<i>existential counselling psychology</i>	Review 29:2	
2018	<i>An Existential Approach to Human Development: Philosophical and Therapeutic Perspectives.</i>		Appendix 1.13
2018	<i>Case Studies in Existential Therapy: Translating theory into practice.</i>		Appendix 1.14
2019	<i>Simone de Beauvoir: existential philosophy and human development.</i>	Existential Analysis 30.1	Appendix 1.15
2020	<i>Reframing Human Development Existentially: a Consideration of Some Invariant Themes</i>	Existential Analysis 31.2	Appendix 1.16

5.3.a Origins

I had long been interested in human development – my own development was what drew me to psychology in the first place – and I did not understand why human development was absent both in the existential therapy literature and in existential training. This lack was additionally puzzling because the foundation philosophers had all talked in their different ways about human development. If it was important to the philosophers, why was it not important to existential psychotherapists?

The argument I heard was that human development was the province of psychology, psychoanalysis or biology, and not relevant to, or consistent with, existential psychotherapy.

This was not an argument that I accepted.

As before, when someone said something ‘*could not be done*’, I needed to find out for myself and if not why not.

There had to be another way.

While teaching at the NSPC I had noticed that its Human Development module was generic and leaned towards stage theory. In 2003 I offered to re-design and teach the course.

At the time I started teaching the module, I was not overly concerned by my own ageing as such. This has changed over the time I taught the course and particularly so during the time I wrote AEAHD. It became much more present to me. Four years after I started teaching the course I started on a Professional Doctorate course and my research was going to be about the challenges of ageing and retirement. I considered it as something that would involve me at some time in the future, and that it would be as well to find out what was in store.

Now, it cannot be ignored.

In existential terms, I was becoming ever more aware of my temporality; my being-towards-death.

In Moustakas' terms I had been Identifying With The Focus Of Inquiry for many years and was starting on the Initial Engagement, Immersion and Incubation phases. The book, which was many years ahead and not being considered as a possibility, would mean moving into Illumination, Explication and Creative Synthesis.

As it happened, all the phases felt simultaneous.

5.3.b Teaching existentialism and human development

Designing and teaching the course presented some challenges. As far as I knew, a course like this had never been taught before.

Whereas the existential practice course existed as a body of knowledge that could be taught in a benign version of the banking method, this could not be done for the human development course because the philosophers who had written about it had woven it so tightly into their philosophies that their different perspectives could not easily be, and had never previously been, compared and contrasted. No commonalities had ever been suggested by any other writers. There was no existential theory of human development that was established or coherent enough to teach...yet.

But I had something more useful than a theory; I had a way of making a theory.

I had a research method – phenomenology.

All I was certain of at the beginning was that stage theory, being derived from natural science and hence biological determinism, was incompatible with an existential model of human development and that an existential model, when it emerged, would be based on phenomenology. This was my starting point.

Reflections on the teaching process

Although I had learnt from every course I had taught, what I learnt was mainly about presentation methods and time management. This was because the delivery of the syllabus took priority over the learning process. While interesting, it was becoming less and less involving. This sentiment is echoed by Spier (2018) who notes that the teaching styles that he felt obliged to follow as a lecturer were uninspiring for both educator and student.

But because there was no established body of knowledge, another teaching method was required.

It is rarely acknowledged that there are two versions of the Socratic method.

One is of the teacher as perceptive questioner who knows the answers and leads the students towards them but without saying what they are.

The other involves the teacher as co-researcher. It is closer to the way I wanted to teach and the ethos of the New School (Appendix 2.1: 49-60) enabled me to do it; to teach existentially, rather than just teach about existentialism.

Morris (1996: 137) says that this method is challenging because

'...the teacher will concentrate on asking those questions that he does not know the answer to. [...], he will learn along with his students'.

He goes on to say that the difficulty is worth it because the advantages are a mutual awakening of choice, freedom and responsibility.

As said, all true learning, all existential learning, is personal learning.

This method is also closer to existential therapeutic practice.

For someone else who relied on prior knowledge of the theory, it would have been difficult. But because my usual way of finding things out is of Immersion before Explication, it was not. It was exciting.

In this sense the course was closer to a research project whose question was

'What are the characteristics of an existential-phenomenological model of human development?

Regarding each course group as a research project meant that the content of discussion was always particular to that group. And the points, preoccupations, questions, insights etc. that came up all constituted that particular groups' version of an existential model to human development. As Emmy van Deurzen says, we were *'a learning community'* (Appendix 2.1: 55-57).

In this sense, all participants, including me, were the course content. And this being so, I knew it would take a while for commonalities to emerge. I was happy to wait. Immersion was ongoing.

This raises the issue of exactly what my position, my status, was on the course. In one sense I was an equal participant, but in another sense I was different from the students because I was the module leader, I had designed the course and had written and published on the subject. This made my position as teacher similar to that of an existential psychotherapist in that we were both equal and different. We were both, in our different ways, there to find out things that we did not know, and our findings were also affected by each other; they were intersubjectively co-constituted.

In another sense, I knew the course needed to have some content, but there needed to be a balance between freedom and structure. It must allow for surprises, just as all good therapeutic practice should.

Too much freedom and too little structure would make the discussion too unfocused; too little freedom and too much structure would stifle discussion. In both cases it would go against the principles of both phenomenological research and also existential learning.

I decided to keep the format of the previous version of the course, which followed Erikson's developmental sequence. Even though Erikson's is a stage theory, it had the phenomenological advantage that the age categories were recognisable from everyday life; they were experience-near.

Over the time I have run the course and in the last five years particularly, the association with Erikson has loosened so much that it is now rarely mentioned. The age ranges are just ways to start a discussion. As with everything else, they are there to be questioned, existentially.

I wanted to give the course enough freedom and structure to be able to reflect the linear nature of life; that we are born and then die and always in that order, as well as the non-linear, circular, purposive nature of life.

Two exercises I do in the first session, one on names and another on life history and narrative (Appendix 3.2, 3.3) are intended to demonstrate the interlocking of time and temporality using participant's own lives.

I chose the presentations not just because they had something to say about human development but because they work with different points of view (Appendix 3.14).

Bakhtin (1981), echoing Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, says that we gain a more accurate vision of the world we are a part of by increasing not reducing the number of perspectives we can accommodate. This is a dialectical approach to knowledge. Bakhtin called this 'polyphony', with its implication of many sounds/voices. It is also closer to the aural nature of discussion-based teaching. Not only did the course participants bring different viewpoints but so did the presentation papers.

Our job was to see if the presentations had anything to tell us, personally, about human development, existentially and phenomenologically. I had learnt that any response based on experience is better than none, and also better than a response based on secondary sources, whatever they were. I also knew from my own experience that if any common features were present at all, if any universals could be identified, they would emerge of their own accord, through Self-Dialogue, Tacit Knowing, Indwelling, Focusing, and The Internal Frame Of Reference. But also that it might take some time.

The specific course that emerged was where the two met. Each intake made a different course. Some students were bemused at both the teaching method and the presentations and some were excited. None were indifferent.

But each presentation had to be tested and this was not by whether it had a good reputation but by its ability to evoke discussion. I am constantly discovering new presentations that need to be tested for this ability.

In order to ensure that everyone gained the most from the presentations I developed guidelines for what I expect from a presentation (Appendix 3.15). I also give guidelines about what I expected from the essay (Appendix 3.16).

These guidelines aim to balance freedom and structure.

If anything, feeling like I do not want to revert to the banking method has become even stronger since *An Existential Approach to Human Development* has been published. Like Spier (2018), I have no interest in giving a lecture each week based on the book. If the student wants to know more, they can read the book. The course and the book are different, and this is the course.

See Appendix 3.13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 for a detailed description of how I ran the sessions of the course and associated material.

I also learnt, as in therapeutic practice, that giving examples from my own life rarely prompted a wider discussion and often quite the opposite. Self-disclosure is inevitable, but it is far more effective when what is disclosed is a way-of-being rather than details of events. If there was a lull in the discussion I knew it was better to wait, to leave a contemplative space. As said, silence is never absence. It is presence, and what emerges from it is invariably a surprise.

Also, it seemed to me that if real life experiences are being addressed, shared, explored, interrogated by the group on their own, as they usually are, and increasingly so as time goes by, there's no need for me to interfere, except to remind them that the end of the session is in a few minutes.

If in a session a presentation was not chosen by a student, the longer I teach the course the more I am inclined to stay with the discussion and not give the presentation, especially if the issues being discussed are the same as those in the presentation, as they frequently are. If they want to know what it says they can read it. Very often the issue is unpacked more meaningfully without the presentation. Giving the presentation would be a distraction and a return to the banking method.

What I judge to be the most successful groups are the ones when I use few external prompts and when I do not need to remind the group to return the discussion to everyday experience. On these occasions there is a greater chance that the discussion will take an unexpected direction into emotionally and existentially powerful, contentious and personally vulnerable areas. I refer to one of these below, on page 52.

I grew to realise that these unexpected diversions were not only the most exciting and insightful, but also that they could never be planned. What worked for one group would not work for another.

All I can do is to try set up the conditions where they could emerge, much like in therapy.

Impact and Evidence

Is it a necessary module for the DPsych and the DProf courses? Emmy van Deurzen considers that it is. Recalling the time I suggested it, she says that '*the whole of the existential theoretical body is about the ongoing human development that life is*' (Appendix 2.1: 99).

And in acknowledging the difficulty in assessing its impact she notes that (Appendix 2.1: 137-138) '*these kind of things take many years to trickle through.*'

Nevertheless, it has had an impact.

Impact on students

- Darren Langdridge, Professor of Psychology and Sexuality at the Open University, was a student on the course in 2006. He notes (Appendix 2.5) that the course was innovative and it was also instrumental in bringing the absence of a human development in existential therapy to his notice, which had not previously occurred to him.
- It was also influential for Meg John Barker, also of the Open University, who was also a student on the course (Appendix 2.6).
- This influence extends to the present day because they both included, in a slightly modified form, the life history and narrative exercise, (Appendix 2.7) in a course they designed for the OU (D240 Counselling: Exploring Fear and Sadness). They also included it in the book that went with the course, (Barker, Vossler, and Langdridge 2010: 139-143). See Appendix 2.7 for the modified chart.
- This OU module ran for ten years with around 1500 students taking it each year. Whereas over the time I have taught the course I have introduced this exercise to about 250 students, the inclusion of this exercise into the OU course and also into Barker et al (2010) has introduced it to getting on for 15000 OU students to date (Appendix 2.5). This does not include all those who bought the book independently of the course.
- Langdridge (Appendix 2.5) also notes that the existential chapter was very popular with students, with many choosing to write assessed assignments based on the chapter.
- Barker (Appendix 2.6) notes that my teaching on the human development course engaged them far more than any previous learning they'd undertaken on either psychodynamic or developmental courses. They also appreciated and continues to appreciate the way I used fiction to illustrate developmental issues. Using Yalom's (2008: 83) metaphor of 'rippling', they also judge that my teaching will have impacted upon a large number of therapists who will now be incorporating my ideas and practices into their client work.

Student assessments

As with the existential practice module, at the end of each module, students are requested to complete an assessment form. See Appendix 2.3b for three recent assessments. All three make encouraging comments both on the teaching method and also the effect of the module on them. The comments are also remarkably uniform.

While both content and process are commented on, it is significant that they are never considered as separate. Instead, it is noted that they complement each other such that while learning about existentialism may well be about finding out what the philosophers have said, what happened on the course was something much more than this. It was about learning existentially, and this is always personal. They also comment in different ways on the quality of my presence as a factor that facilitated this quality of learning.

Other student feedback

Occasionally, in addition to completing the anonymous assessment form, students have given me unsolicited feedback. Appendix 2.3c contains five such examples.

While these echo the themes referred to above, what I find encouraging about them is that they single out the nature of the freedom to think out loud that they found on the course. One refers to it as a '*free thinking space*' and the other as the '*freedom of telling and retelling of our narrative*'. There is also an appreciation of the balance between freedom and structure.

Impact on research

The experience of being a Doctoral Counselling Psychology trainee on the course influenced one trainee's choice of research. Her project, 'The Reluctant Therapist? The Experience of Working Therapeutically with the Older Client' (Collins, 2014), which I supervised through to completion, arose out of a pivotal moment on the course when during a discussion on working therapeutically with older people she realised that she was at odds with most of her fellow trainees who thought that working with older people would *be 'an unrewarding experience, [...] as it would be difficult to do 'proper therapy'* (Collins, 2014: 8).

I remember this moment well, it was the last session of the course, and it impressed on me the reality of something I had barely been aware of until then; ageism. And moreover that it was alive and well in this particular group of Counselling Psychology trainees, who were, not surprisingly, mostly in their 30's.

It is an example of how having set up the conditions for openness, surprises and unexpected insights could then emerge. And that the effect of these would persist long after the course had ended. This experience, and the content of the research influenced the section I wrote in SIECP 2e on *Working with people at either end of the life span* and then my writing of AEAHD.

It also prompted me to become more aware of ageism, both in society, in myself, and also towards me.

Other work

Because of my work on human development, the Portuguese Society for Existential Psychotherapy (SPPE) asked me to teach the module on their training course in 2009. The module is still being taught by one of the students who was on the course (Appendix 2.4).

5.3.c Writing about existentialism and human development

The combination of my own emerging thinking about the characteristics of an existential approach to human development, the continuing absence of anything published in the existential therapeutic literature, and the impressions I had got from teaching the course, prompted me to write about it.

My first piece was a journal paper *Towards an Existential Phenomenological theory of Human Development* (2006) (Appendix 1.10).

Between then and late 2014 when I started to write *An Existential Approach to Human Development* (2018) (AEAHD), I wrote two more papers, including one specifically for Counselling Psychologists, and presented at three conferences (Appendix 1.11 and 1.12).

I was also finding myself as a writer and it became inevitable that my next step was to write what eventually became *An Existential Approach to Human Development* (Appendix 1.13).

But having more to say was not the only reason to write it. I wanted to honour in a more concrete way the contribution the students had made to my thinking about the issue. I wanted to acknowledge that while I may well have clarified the research question for them, they had certainly clarified it for me. We had clarified it for each other.

Also, and this is a link to my life in general, the curiosity I had about the challenges of ageing and retirement that was going to be my research topic on the Professional Doctorate course some eight years before, was making itself felt with increasing strength. I was actively thinking about my own ageing and retirement. I was indeed researching into it, but instead of looking at it from the outside, I was living it; I was immersed in it. I was doing it in the way I had always researched into things, by experiencing, and then by reflecting on that experience.

Dating from about the time I started to write AEAHD, I have had in front of me, pinned to a bookshelf, a list of friends and clients who have had a life-threatening health condition. The list is divided into three columns, Died, Stable, and Recovered. There are currently 19 names on it and the Died column is the longest. My friend Rosie, referred to in chapter 2, is not on this list as she died many years ago, when a peer dying was an exception; it was not going to happen to me. Now death is not an exception. This context statement is being written during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am in the 'at-risk' group by virtue of my age, and I caught the virus just before the first lockdown started when the death rate was rapidly increasing and little was known about the condition and there was no testing. I had what has become known as 'mild' effects but nevertheless I was unable to do anything except rest and sleep for three weeks. No work was done on the context statement during this time and I knew that no more work would get done on it until and unless I recovered. Luckily, unlike some other people, I have had no lasting effects from it.

Reflections on the writing process

Having decided to write the book, the next question was how it should be written.

At first it seemed a relatively simple task of translating the taught course into a book. I had done it for SIECP 1e and 2e and ACIEC, and I thought the same principles would apply. This was naïve. I discovered after the proposal was accepted that the same principles did not apply.

One reason was that the students had a level of familiarity with existential philosophy that I could assume. I could have no such expectations about the likely readers. I had to get my readers to the same place as the students. But how? I wasn't prepared to write a primer in existential philosophy.

But the biggest reason was that while it had a basic structure, the syllabus of the human development course was not predetermined. The participants were the syllabus. Each time it ran it was different. It was a perpetual research work in progress. While this was its strength as a course, it presented problems when trying to write it down.

In this sense the course, as such, could not be written down at all. A consequence of this is that the detail of the book has little in common with the course. Some of the course presentations barely appear in the book because their purpose on the course was not as a summary of knowledge but to evoke discussion and personal reflection.

Above all, the book needed to be far more explicit than the course. The book was Explication and Creative Synthesis, whereas the course was Immersion, Incubation and Illumination.

I needed to make the book as accessible as the course, but in a different medium. I wanted the reader to be active and to have the same back and forth associations as the course participants had. I wanted, above all for them to keep a sense of a whole life, their whole life, their temporality, as they were reading it.

This meant that it needed to be written in a way that reflected two opposite dynamics.

One was that life is linear in the sense that we are born and then die and always in that order and we are all subject to automatic maturational processes that are mediated by socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a particular age in a particular culture at a particular time.

But this is not all it is.

The other is that existentially we are not passive, and life, as Sartre says, is not linear. Sartre (1968: 106) suggests instead that *'a life develops in spirals; it passes again and again by the same points but at different levels of integration and complexity'*. This idea is one that I had already incorporated into my exercise, developed many years before, on Life History and Narrative (Appendix 3.3).

And as if this were not enough, we are also subject to randomness and chance, e.g. who gets cancer, or COVID-19, and with what severity.

Instead of a linear, stage-based, model of human development, the model most consistent with existentialism is a life-long process model based on the acquisition of the skills of living, knowing not only that we are all life-long apprentices trying to achieve something that we will never get; mastery; but also that this is what makes life exciting and worthwhile.

This radically reframes what is meant by development because existentially, instead of being

about moving passively from one quasi-biological stage to the next, it is about how we actively meet the paradoxes and dilemmas of existence, minute by minute. It is about how we make choices about the future on the basis of incomplete knowledge about the past and the present, both in the context of how long we expect to be alive for and also in the context of human life in general.

We learn, actively, how to live, every moment between birth and death. And this is a skill subject to the skills learning process (Appendix 1.2).

It is in this sense, as Emmy van Deurzen echoes, (Appendix 2.1: 99) that all psychotherapy is about human development.

In spite of the resonances of the word 'development', I decided to use it because any other word would confuse. Optimum simplicity.

But I still needed to find a structure that preserved the simultaneous linearity and non-linearity of human development.

I came up with a number of what I thought were solutions, only to abandon them as dead-ends. I wanted to write existentially and not just about existentialism, and I thought many times that the book was unwritable, possibly at all, but definitely by me. In an example of Argyris and Schön's (1974) double-loop learning, I realised that it was not just a case of finding a better way of writing the course as a book, there was something fundamentally flawed about my original approach to it. But what? I found myself in a position of conscious incompetence in the Skills Learning Process (Malone 2003, Gordon and Burch 2003, Adams 2017). I had no idea how to do it. I was stuck.

The solution, which seems obvious now but certainly did not at the time, came by abandoning the organising framework of chronology that I had used on the course and substituting it with two sections, one on the philosophy told through the lives of the philosophers, and one on the therapeutic implications.

This also solved the problem of case illustrations which the word count alone would not allow for because the number of topics was simply too great for each one to be covered in any meaningful way in a book of its size, or maybe any size. On the course, the case illustrations were supplied by the participants and I hoped that the readers would find some echoes between the ideas in the book and their own lives. Using the lives of the philosophers as case illustrations made an inevitable correlation between their ideas and the way they lived. This was not just a neat technical solution, because how we live, think, feel and develop are inextricably linked. We know this from both clinical and personal experience. It is phenomenological. Whether we know it or not, we live our philosophy and our reflexivity allows it to come to light.

It also reinforced for me that there was a difference between working as an existential philosopher (or writer or therapist) and living existentially as a philosopher (or writer or therapist). Between writing existentially and writing about existentialism.

In a similar way, the word count did not allow for exercise boxes and key points that I had used effectively, but rather didactically, in SIECP and ACIEC. They had elements of the banking

method about them anyway; telling the readers how to apply the ideas and what the key points were before they had had the chance to work it out for themselves.

The process of immersing myself in

- the lives of the philosophers and their different ideas of human development,
- the themes that were recurring in the different course groups,
- what my clients talk to me about, and,
- what I has been important to me in my own life,

led, using my principle of optimum simplicity, to eight experience-near existential themes of human development. These themes were then discussed, a chapter for each, in terms of their differing significance for us between birth and death.

In this way I was able to do what had never been done before; to say something definitive about the characteristics of an existential-phenomenological model of human development.

Impact and Evidence

As said, I did not understand why so few other people were interested in a topic that I thought was so central. I was not alone though, as Emmy van Deurzen notes (Appendix 2.1: 103). She says that the whole of human life is about development *'based in our capacity for completeness, and reflection and learning'*.

The book has only recently been published, September 2018, and its impact so far as I can gather, has been small, but as Emmy van Deurzen says, (Appendix 2.1: 138) *'these kind of things take many years to trickle through.'*

The success of a book such as mine depends on a number of factors. Because it is not a mass-market book, the main factor is how many course reading lists it is on. This is very difficult to know and courses tend not to officially update very often and it depends largely on the preferences of the person teaching it. The sales figures would suggest not many (Appendix 2.11), but it is certainly many more than the number of students I have taught since publication.

Looked at in one way it is a book that could appeal to many different sorts of people; psychotherapists, philosophers as well as psychologists. But because professionals tend to be rather parochial in their interests this may not be the case. It is the sort of book that could be thought too psychotherapeutic for philosophers, too philosophical for psychologists, etc. Also the publisher operates a print-on-demand policy, and bookshops, even academic bookshops, are unlikely to stock a book that they do not have a known market for. So it will miss out on people browsing for books that may catch their interest. Having said that, Amazon may catch some of these.

- Reviews and endorsements

The book was favourably reviewed in the journal *Existential Analysis* (Appendix 2.9d). The reviewer notes a number of points, e.g. that I am keen to get away from stage theory because it is an artifact of the research method, and that I want the book to be a reader's book not a writer's book. It achieved this aim for this reviewer, who also notes that how risky it is (her word was '*audacious*') in existential circles to aspire to generate a model of any sort, deterministic or otherwise. I was certainly aware of this issue when coming up with a title for the book, deliberately choosing the slightly weaker word 'approach', than the stronger word 'model' or the word 'characteristics' that I use provocatively on the course.

One of the people contacted by the publisher for an endorsement, the philosopher and writer Gary Cox, picked up on a point that I mention in the context of the philosophers and the way they lived, and that underpins this context statement (Appendix 2.9d). It is about the difference between working as an existential philosopher (or writer or therapist) and living existentially as a philosopher (or writer or therapist). Although I am familiar with his work, he is not known personally to me. He says,

'Martin Adams practises what he preaches and his practice expertly informs his theories...'

Somehow, he felt that from the way I write that I was not just writing about existentialism, I hadn't just read the books; I knew from experience what they meant, and that this was where my authority came from. If this is so, then I had successfully translated my way-of-being from the teaching context to the writing context. As with teaching, I did not need to disclose how my particular personal experiences were linked to what I said, they came through in the writing and what was most personal to me was also most universal.

I was writing existentially.

- The Weekend University

The Weekend University is an organisation that aims to '*make the best ideas in psychology more accessible to the general public*'. To do this it gets leaders in their field to run study days on their topic. On the strength of the book I was asked to do one of these (Appendix 2.15) and the whole talk is available on YouTube (Adams 2020). By January 2021 it had been viewed 974 times.

5.4 Case Studies in Existential Therapy: Translating theory into practice

Ed. Simon du Plock. PCCS 2019

Even though a previous version of this text, (du Plock 1997) became out of print some years

ago, it has still been in demand. It was therefore decided, instead of reissuing it, to write a new edition that reflected a new generation of existential practitioners (Appendix 1.14).

I was asked to contribute a chapter on Human Development and this was an opportunity to link my two preoccupations; existential practice and human development.

Explaining how this came about, the editor, Simon du Plock, (Appendix 2.13) says that the quality and content of my contributions over the years made me an obvious choice. He also notes that my chapter was one of the first to be submitted and required little editorial input.

Reflections on the writing process

As it was an edited book, there were guidelines for the structure for each chapter. As well as providing some uniformity, it also placed some constraints over the way I wrote it. This meant that it was rather more formal than I would have preferred. These constraints included some theoretical background followed by a case illustration. I wrote it in a similar way to the illustration in ACIEC in that it was a fictional reconstruction of real events, but because of the word count and editorial guidelines, I could not treat it in the same way. I tried to keep it experience-near by including as much (constructed) verbatim as possible.

A valuable innovation of the book was to include a conversation between the author and the editor at the end of each chapter. Although the editor is clearly an informed reader, it enabled the topic to become more alive and conversational than it otherwise would have been because the editor was able to pick out points that he felt needed clarifying and exploring in a way that was not possible in the chapter.

Impact and Evidence

At the time of writing there have been no reviews but sales have been 'respectable', and that this 'augurs well for a second edition in the future' (Appendix 2.13).

Without mentioning any particular contributors the endorsements (Appendix 2.14) emphasise the uniqueness, importance and readability of the book. One also notes the value of the conversations at the end of the chapters. They all note that the issues cover the whole of life, from birth through to death and also that the book gives an insight into the way existential therapy works without recourse to manualisation.

In Appendix 2.13 the editor Simon du Plock comments favourably about my chapter and my professionalism.

5.5 Existential Analysis

The Society for Existential Analysis was founded in 1988 and started publishing the professional journal *Existential Analysis* in 1990. The purpose of both is 'to provide a forum for the expression of views, and the exchange of ideas, amongst those interested in existential-phenomenological analysis and its application to therapeutic practice and everyday life'. Since 1995 *Existential Analysis* has published two issues each year, each with about 13 papers of

different sorts including research papers, theoretical papers and practice papers, as well as a book reviews section

5.5a Book reviews, Existential Analysis (2007 – 2020)

Book reviews editor, Existential Analysis (2007 – 2017)

In the chart below the reviews in the last five years are in **bold**

Date	Title	Publication	Appendix
2007	Existential Analysis 2007 18.1	<i>The Other Side of You.</i> Salley Vickers	
2009	Existential Analysis 2009 20.2	<i>Trauma and Human Existence : Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic and Philosophical Reflections.</i> Robert Stolorow.	
2011	Existential Analysis 2011 22.1	<i>The Case for Working with Your Hands: or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good,</i> Matthew Crawford.	
2011	Existential Analysis 2011 22.2	<i>The Sartre Dictionary. Sartre and Fiction. How to be an Existentialist,</i> Gary Cox	
2013	Existential Analysis 2013 24.2	<i>The Existentialist's Guide to Death, the Universe and Nothingness.</i> Gary Cox	
2015	Existential Analysis 2015 26.2	<i>Sailing - Catching the Drift of Why We Sail.</i> Goold P. (ed.), <i>Cycling: A Philosophical Tour De Force</i> Ilundáin-Agurruza, J. and Austin, M. (eds.)	Appendix 1.16
2020	Existential Analysis 2020 31.2	<i>Living Well and Dying Well: Tales of counselling older people.</i> Helen Kewell	Appendix 1.16

Reflections on the writing process

I began writing book reviews for the BACP journal in 1992, and I used them to refine my writing skills. By 2007 I had gained a clearer idea of not only what the qualities of book reviews should be, but also of their possibilities.

Like other professional journals Existential Analysis had a book reviews section. Since I first became familiar with it in 1995, it seemed to me that although the books reviewed were relevant,

the range was narrow and unimaginative. The fact that it was always at the back of each issue seemed to reflect the value given to it; as an afterthought.

There had to be another way.

When I took over being book reviews editor in 2007 I wanted to do something about this. I wanted to make the reviews something that readers might turn to first, rather than last. I also wanted to introduce different ways of reviewing and also reviews of different sorts of books and of different media. In order to introduce some professionalism into the process, I wrote guidelines for prospective reviewers that combined both freedom and structure (Appendix 3.20).

I also wanted to widen the scope of what was included in the book reviews section. At the beginning, progress was slow. I needed to be active. I first had to find and cultivate a group of people who

- wanted to write reviews,
- could write reviews, and
- could deliver the review on time.

I used contacts I had from my teaching to round up a group of people who had a wide range of interests and abilities that I could call on. I quickly discovered that I needed to have about three times as many books out for review as the six I needed for each issue.

When I took over, the tradition was that the only books that were reviewed were those sent by publishers. I started to request books and included fiction, autobiography, popular culture including film and also works outside conventional professional boundaries. My own reviews reflected this variety (Appendix 1.17). Reviewers had their own interests and a new reviewer had to be found for every new topic and genre. I always tried to find a reviewer who had a personal investment in the subject, rather than just a professional interest. Unlike the rest of the journal, all reviews had to be commissioned. People rarely volunteered.

An example of an innovation, and one that echoes the principle of polyphony is that I got a single book to be reviewed by three different people in the same issue. The book in question was *Zone of the Interior* by Clancy Sigal (Sigal 2005) and is a fictionalised account of R.D. Laing's therapeutic practice. Starting from the principle that personal experience of a subject makes the review more authoritative, all three reviewers came to the job of reviewing the book from different personal directions. It has to be said that few books lend themselves so obviously to this treatment as this one.

I also started the tradition, continued by the person who took over in 2017, of writing an editorial for the book reviews section (Appendix 1.18).

When I stopped being book reviews editor in 2017 I wrote a job specification sheet for applicants (Appendix 3.19).

Impact and Evidence

The editor of *Existential Analysis*, Simon du Plock, says (Appendix 2.13) that leading by example, I worked to increase not just the number but also the quality of reviews such that the reviews frequently '*went beyond description to a [...] detailed critique*' that complemented the papers. This reinforced the purpose of the Journal.

This is being continued by the current book reviews editor.

5.5b Co-editor, *Existential Analysis*

Having been book reviews editor on *Existential Analysis* for ten years until 2017, and having had considerably more experience in writing for publication, when the vacancy came up as co-editor, I felt it was time to move on.

Reflections on the writing process

This is probably a slightly inaccurate title because little actual writing apart from the co-written editorial gets done by me or my co-editor, but for the sake of consistency I will keep it because the overall work concerns writing and writers.

The work consists of overseeing the submissions and all parts of the peer review and publication process. It includes encouraging reluctant authors, reminding authors and peer reviewers of deadlines as well as proof reading, copy editing and determining the running order for the contents.

Because the submissions are largely unsolicited there is also no way of knowing what the content of the next issue will contain or whether it will exist at all. This accentuates the pressure on us because it is equivalent to publishing a full size edited book twice each year with no flexibility on the publication date.

Because of my experience as reviews editor I built up a large range of contacts in the field and on occasion I have commissioned papers for the journal. I am also able to suggest reviewers for books if the current reviews editor cannot find one.

Impact and Evidence

With respect to my move from being book reviews editor to co-editor, the current other co-editor Simon du Plock, says (Appendix 2.13) that my work as book reviews editor encouraged him to believe that I would be well-suited to the role of co-editor. Other factors were my track-record of publications on areas of existential-phenomenological therapy over an extended period, my established status as a teacher and trainer in the field and my ability to follow a publishing project through from conception to completion.

It is only a short time since I started as co-editor, but he goes on to note that this has indeed proved to be the case.

6. Teaching existentially, or teaching about existentialism?

Writing existentially, or writing about existentialism?

In this chapter I will draw some threads together that have underpinned my teaching and writing life, but particularly so in the last five years.

I have long been preoccupied by the conditions that promote learning and it was this that drew me into psychotherapy in the first place. But the focus of this context statement is less on psychotherapy and more on teaching and writing about psychotherapy.

It is my contention that both teaching and writing can be effective as each other in promoting existential learning. And also that this learning is promoted if, as in the words of the title of this chapter, I am teaching existentially rather than just teaching about existentialism, and writing existentially, rather than just writing about existentialism. Adherence to the banking method of education will make the process of teaching and writing (and also reading) into teaching about existentialism and writing about existentialism, rather than teaching existentially, or writing existentially.

The chart on the next page describes some of the similarities and differences between teaching and writing. Although I have included a column for psychotherapy for comparison, in my discussion I will be concentrating on teaching and writing.

Also, although I have distinguished sixteen separate categories and each is important in its own way, they only become significant when they are contrasted and when they overlap, for this is when paradoxes and dilemmas are revealed. Therefore I will not be going through them in order. Instead I will be talking more discursively about the issues involved in teaching and writing, and will indicate when each one is referred to.

Table 1. Comparison of therapy, teaching and writing

	Therapy a.	Teaching about existentialism b.	Teaching existentially c.	Writing about existentialism d.	Writing existentially e.
1.Content	a. Negotiated between the individuals	b. Determined by the syllabus	c. Determined by the syllabus, but developed by the participants	d. Determined by the writer	e. Determined by the writer
2. Number of people	a. 1:1 Known to each other	b. Group.	c. Group. Known to each other	d. One as writer, many readers. All unknown to each other	e. One as writer, many readers. All unknown to each other
3. Time	a. Simultaneous	b. Simultaneous	c. Simultaneous	d. Separate	e. Separate
4. Meaning	a. Personal	b. Universal	c. Personal / Universal	d. Universal	e. Personal / Universal
5. Personal risk	a. High	b. Low	c. High	d. Low	e. High
6. Self-disclosure	a. By way-of-being; rarely explicit	b. Rare	c. By way-of-being; rarely explicit	d. Rare	e. By way-of-being; rarely explicit
7. Outcome	a. Unpredictable	b. Predictable	c. Unpredictable	d. Unpredictable	e. Unpredictable
8. Ambiguity	a. High	b. Low. Few issues are debatable	c. High. All issues are debatable	d. Low. Clarity is primary.	e. Low. Spaces left for the reader
9. Mode of language	a. Idiolect	b. Common language	c. Dialect	d. Common language	e. Common language
10. Vocabulary	a. Everyday	b. Specialist + everyday	c. Everyday + specialist	d. Specialist	e. Everyday + specialist
11. Pronouns	a. Personal: I, you, we	b. Impersonal: He, she, it, they, one	c. Personal. I, you, we	d. Impersonal: He, she, it, they, one	e. Personal. I, you, we
12. Verbal mode	a. Informal	b. Formal	c. Formal + informal	d. Formal	e. Formal + informal
13. Literary mode	a. Poetry	b. Prose	c. Prose + poetic	d. Prose	e. Prose + poetic
14. Mode of presentation	a. Conversation 1:1	b. Lecture. 1: many	c. Lecture, performance, conversation. 1:1, 1:many	d. Written word. 1:many	e. Writing as talking. 1:1, 1:many
15. Use of space	a. Through silence and open questions	b. Through discussion of given content	c. Through development of given content and open questions	d. Little space given	e. Through examples and polyphony
16.Freedom and structure	a. Negotiated	b. High structure, Low freedom	c. Low structure, High freedom	d. High structure, Low freedom	e. High structure, High freedom

- The overall intention of teaching and writing existentially.

As said, I have never been interested in promoting the banking method of education, whether in my therapeutic practice, in my teaching, or in my writing. Instead, my intention has always been to facilitate a fertile and shared contemplative space where new thoughts and feelings can emerge for both myself and the students alike (4ace, 15ace).

- Teaching existentially and the Socratic method.

In my teaching I can facilitate this space in a way closer to the ethics of existentialism by monitoring the students' responses to the content and the process (4ce, 5ce, 7ce). Compared with teaching about existentialism, this is risky because what follows can never be predicted (7ce, 8ce, 15ce). As a teaching method it aligns more with the version of the Socratic method that sees the teacher as co-researcher, rather than as a knowledgeable questioner.

- Freedom and structure when teaching existentially.

My intention is always that both the content and process become embodied by the students, rather than just remembered (4bc). As with psychotherapy, its success is dependent on my presence and my attunement to the students' needs of space, freedom and structure (6ac, 11ac, 12ac, 15ac, 16ac). In doing this I am constantly reminded that the relationship between freedom and structure is neither either/or, nor one-size-fits-all, but is a much more subtle, fluid and profound both/and relationship such that the right kind of structure can allow the possibilities of freedom to be discovered. By the same token, the wrong kind of structure can limit or even distort these possibilities (4ac, 5ac, 6ac, 7ac, 8ac, 16ac). And that each is dependent on context.

- The use of language when teaching existentially.

The term idiolect was coined by Roustang (1986: 72) to describe the idiosyncratic form of language that a particular client and therapist develop together. When people first meet they use a common language that is low in ambiguity, personal meaning, and risk. As we come to understand each other we develop a personal language and we become known to each other by the development of this personal language (4a, 5a, 8a, 9a, 12a, 13a).

In teaching existentially, as in therapy, silences can be left, sentences can stop, begin again or change direction. Words can take on multiple meanings (8a, 9a). The sound *Hmmm...*, with or without a question mark, can develop many personal and profound meanings in therapy and

also when teaching existentially, but will mean nothing at all when written for an unknown readership, or for a conference audience, or when teaching about existentialism (8ace, 12ace, 13ace, 14ace).

The way language is used when teaching existentially contains some aspects of the idiolect as well as aspects of a common language (9ab). In this sense it is perhaps closer to a dialect (4c, 5c, 8c, 9c, 12c).

- The idiolect and the poetic.

In general terms, the poetic is the agent of personal learning, of existential learning, because it enables the person to engage with the text on their own terms rather than on the terms prescribed by person who originated it. (4ce, 7ce, 9ce, 12ce, 13ce). It is at this point that what is universal becomes most personal (4ce, 13ce).

One way of encouraging the poetic is through the development of an idiolect, but this can clearly not be done in the same way in writing as it can in teaching or in therapy (2ace, 9ace, 13ace). Writing existentially demands that I negotiate the dilemma of reducing the possibility of misunderstandings at the same time as leaving space for the reader (8e, 13e, 14e, 15e, 16e). The answer, '*It depends...*', has to be answered in way that is clear and unambiguous at the same time as giving space for the reader to consider what is written for themselves (8e, 16e).

The points made in a book are fixed, whereas the points made when teaching existentially are not, they are simply there to start a discussion (1ce, 7ce, 8ce). Ambiguity cannot be exploited when writing existentially in the same way as when teaching existentially because there is no idiolect and writing is a linear medium that has to conform to the rules of prose (13bcde).

However, within these constraints, when writing existentially, it is still possible to evoke the poetic in the reader who can take it in their own direction. (4e, 7e, 8e, 13e, 14e, 15e, 16e).

- Self-disclosure by way-of-being when teaching and writing existentially.

As in therapy, when teaching and writing existentially my presence and attunement is rarely facilitated by discrete examples of explicit self-disclosure, indeed it is frequently destroyed by this sort of intervention.

Instead, my self-disclosure is implicit; it is by means of my way-of-being and is woven into the teaching process (6c). Techniques are specific and remembered, but my way-of-being is embodied; it is who I am (4ac, 5ac, 6ac, 7ac, 8ac, 13ac, 15ac). It develops gradually by trial and error through the skills learning process.

When teaching and writing existentially, my way-of-being becomes embodied in my writing (6e). This can be done technically by use of personal (I, we) rather than impersonal (you, he, she, it, one) pronouns (4e, 11e). This keeps the content experience-near (4e, 11e). I can also do it in a more implicit way by ensuring that I know what each point means. This also ensures

that the words I use are my own and not someone else's (6e). It is this that makes the book personal to me, rather than just another book that summarises other people's views (4e, 5e, 11e).

- Writing existentially for different contexts.

Making a conference presentation is a special case and it throws up a paradox. It is that even though I do it in person, in real time, the constraints imposed by the banking method mean that the experience is closer to teaching about existentialism or writing about existentialism (2bd, 3bd, 4bd, 7bd, 8bd, 9bd, 11bd, 13bd, 14bd, 16bd) than to teaching existentially or writing existentially (2ce, 3ce, 4ce, 7ce, 8ce, 9ce, 11ce, 13ce, 14ce, 16ce). There are three reasons for this. The first is that I do not have the opportunity to get to know the individuals in the audience nor will they get the opportunity to get to know each other. They will also be numbered in dozens or even hundreds. The second reason is that they will probably be sat in rows, echoing the banking method that stifles personal agency, rather than a circle that would enable me to teach existentially. The third reason is that the time allotted is never enough for anything but the most cursory of discussions. If there is to be a discussion at all, it usually happens informally in the break times. It is the discussion of the ideas, not the ideas as such, that facilitates existential learning. This cannot happen if it is done on-line.

The same happens when writing for journal publication and also for edited books. In these cases the editorial constraints – writing style, length, format of the chapter etc. - conspire to make my writing less personal and rather more concise and have more certainty and less ambiguity than I would prefer. It becomes closer to writing about existentialism than writing existentially (4de, 5de, 8de, 12de, 14de, 16de).

When I am the only author of a commercially published work e.g. in ACIEC and AEAHD, the editorial constraints are looser and more flexible; I can decide what to write and how to write it and I can be more discursive rather than feeling I have to be as concise and definitive as possible.

- Polyphony and teaching existentially.

When teaching existentially I do not present the ideas as fixed or as mutually exclusive (12c, 14c). Instead, I use the polyphony of the material to facilitate a discussion that is then added to by the students' understanding of it to make something new, unexpected and particular to that group (8c, 12c, 13c, 15c, 16c).

Another way I introduce polyphony is with structured exercises that allow the students the space to use the authority of their own experience to find themselves within the exercise (15c, 16c).

- Translating experience into teaching and writing existentially.

Teaching also involves me in writing, both in an informal and a formal sense. I have to make decisions about what to say, how to say it, and when and if to say it (1ce, 4ce, 5ce, 7ce, 9ce). I have to acknowledge all my private and unchallenged assumptions, and then translate them into a format so they can be communicated but also questioned. It forces me to ask '*Is this exactly what I mean, is this so in all cases, and if not how*' (1ce, 4ce, 5ce, 6ce, 12ce). Because it is always open for discussion, misunderstandings can be clarified, but also new insights can be gained. (4ce, 5ce, 6ce, 8c, 9c, 12c). Although it is delivered by me, in person, it does not stand on its own. My notes are just notes; they are no use to anyone else because what happens on each occasion is always mediated by these particular students (1ce, 2ce, 4c). This makes every student group different (4c).

Writing for an audience not present involves a rather more formal translation but even in this sort of writing I am also talking, but to imagined readers (see chapter 5.2.c.2 above) and speculating on their responses (2e, 3e, 9e, 10e, 12ce, 13ce, 14ce).

- Writing and the banking method.

In one sense, all writing, all my writing, can tend towards the banking method because as the author I have to say what I want to say clearly and unambiguously. Because I am writing for many readers, all unknown to me, I have to use a language that is universal and low in ambiguity and therefore there is no relational space for an idiolect to develop (8e). I cannot write *Hmmm*, with or without a question mark.

My intention in using the exercises etc. in the books on existential practice (SIECP 1e and 2e, and ACIEC) was to encourage polyphony and engagement but while they make the books closer to the first Socratic method they still have elements of the banking method. When I wrote AEAHD I wanted to do it differently; I wanted to let the polyphony of the philosophers' different perspectives speak for themselves and thus to leave more space for the reader to make connections. I also wanted to give the readers more responsibility for asking the questions (4c, 7c, 8c, 9c, 15c, 16c). Of course, I had no way of knowing whether they did this.

In AEAHD I chose not to use exercises etc. as they had elements of the banking method about them. Paradoxically, this aspect made the book closer to the course as taught (14e, 15e).

- Time and teaching and writing existentially.

A difference between teaching and writing relates to time. In writing, the reader can read the book whenever they choose, at whatever speed they choose, and they can read the pages in whatever order they choose (3e, 16e). They can also read it for their own interest rather than as part of a course (4e).

In teaching, although students will have their own responses to it, the material is covered in a particular order and at a particular speed determined by the qualities of the group. It will also be done for a particular purpose; as a part of a course that they wish to pass (3ce).

One reason I rarely refer to AEAHD when teaching is to separate it from the assessment process that inevitably reinforces the power differential between myself and the students (1bcd, 4bc).

- The paradox of writing existentially.

There is another paradox involved in writing and it is that while writing is written for many and reading is done individually, they are both done in private.

As a writer, I don't just write words on a page, I write for particular, unknown but imagined readers (see chapter 5.2.c.2 above). In a similar way, as a reader I don't just read words on a page, I read what this particular person, the writer, has written. This leads me to wonder who the writer is. I can imagine the writer is talking just to me and I can use my annotations to start a conversation with the writer (2ae, 14ae). A book that was once just words on a page, anonymous and communal, then becomes personal; it becomes our shared book, and the words become our words (2ae, 14ae). And as a reader I find personal meaning in the universal (4e) and the effect can be similar to psychotherapy (1ae, 2ae, 4ae, 8ae, 13ae, 14ae).

But this is by no means automatic.

It is a consequence of writing existentially.

Both the content and the process of the writing has to give the reader enough space to ask questions both of the material and of themselves. The experience of reading the book will only be personal if the reader can find him or herself in it. If they do then it will evoke the poetic. If not, if the meaning stays as words on the page, and if the reader does not make any annotations, then the book has not been engaging enough and the reader feels talked at, or told. This is the banking method.

This is writing about existentialism and consequently, as a reader, I become progressively less in touch with who I am and the way I am living, rather than more in touch, and the author becomes more and more anonymous and authoritative, if not authoritarian.

If this happens, as a writer I have probably not given the reader enough loose ends to hold on to (5d, 6d, 7d, 11d, 14d, 15d, 16d). Or perhaps my 'voice' has not been polyphonic enough to evoke questions (4d, 8d, 12d, 13d, 15d, 16d).

But as a writer this is something I will never know whereas as a teacher I will (7bcde).

- The use of space in therapy, teaching, and writing.

Space can be understood physically, psychologically and existentially. It can refer to absence, to sterile emptiness, or it can refer to presence, to fertile possibility. (4de, 6de, 8bcde, 15de).

In psychotherapy, as well as when teaching existentially and also when writing existentially, the intention is always to use it in the latter sense, to use the structure of the course to promote a relationship with the material such that the possibilities of freedom, of alternatives, can be entertained (6ce, 9ce, 16ce).

When teaching, feedback on how the students are meeting and using the possibilities offered by the course presentations, the discussion space and the group experience is continuous and my approach can be modified accordingly (2c, 3c).

In writing, space is a function of the content and the writing style. As said, the reader can get some space by stopping reading, back tracking, annotating, wondering, etc. etc. (2ce, 3ce, 15ce). But as a writer although I can do what I can to promote it, I will never know if, when, how and why this happens (2e, 3e). Nor can I respond to it. The published work has to stand on its own in the world for all time, simultaneously both mine and not mine. Both personal and impersonal.

7. Conclusion

When I started on the journey that led to the completion of this context statement, although I wanted to investigate the relationship between my teaching and my writing about psychotherapy, I had little idea what route I would take or what I would find.

In my introduction I suggested that just as there is an existential way of being a psychotherapist, there is also an existential way of teaching and an existential way of writing, and that these, in their different ways, promote personal, existential learning both for teacher and student and also for writer and reader.

When I started the research process of this context statement, the furthest I had got in my thinking about the relationship between therapy, teaching and writing were that the differences and similarities were a function of context. In my Introduction I referred to Kierkegaard's maxim that although life must be lived forwards, it can only be understood backwards, and that this leaves us with the paradox that life can never really be fully understood because all conclusions are provisional and every ending is a new beginning. This context statement has allowed me the space to clarify, at this moment in time, the many ways this is so, what the dilemmas and paradoxes are, and what it was like for me to investigate it.

For me, phenomenology has never just been a formal research method; it has been a way of life, and re-visiting this led to my reacquaintance with Moustakas' Heuristic Inquiry, whose phases and processes describe the way I have usually found things out both in the way this context statement has been written, and also what I have written about.

Investigating the relationship between teaching and writing uncovered my underlying and long-time curiosity about learning and about what conditions facilitate or hinder learning.

It reminded me yet again that the intimate relationship between research and personal learning can be summarised in the skills learning process and is about persistently asking questions that we do not know the answer to.

When we research existentially, we learn about the nature of our existence, and we find out how we learn, how we sabotage our learning, and what we need in order to learn in a way that allows us to get what we want out of life, knowing all the time that this can change.

Human development is a skills learning process.

Having reviewed and evaluated my public works, principally of the last five years, in chapters 5 and 6, I am now in the position of being able to formulate the final phase of Moustakas' sequence; Creative Synthesis.

Moustakas (1990) has talked about the value of other mediums e.g. poetry, fiction, drawing or painting to represent the Creative Synthesis.

The essence of teaching existentially and writing existentially is less to do with the content of the teaching; any subject can be taught existentially and any subject can be written about existentially. Instead, the essence of teaching existentially and writing existentially is that the teaching process always involves the taught, and the writing process always involves the reader. It is a relationship. And also that the outcome can neither be predicted, nor can there ever be an end-point to learning.

Teaching without the involvement of students is not teaching existentially, and writing without the involvement of readers is not writing existentially.

Accordingly, when considering the nature of my Creative Synthesis, I needed something that would apply equally to the teaching process and to the writing process, and would also demonstrate something of the process of creative cooperative learning. It would need to be simple enough so that the detail did not distract, and also complex and flexible enough to enable it to adapt to different circumstances and contexts.

It would need to have that elusive balance between freedom and structure that would allow for surprises.

This meant that it needed to be abstract, i.e. its application to existentialism, or to therapy, or to teaching, or to writing per se, should not be uppermost. Participants would need to be able to find their own meaning in it, rather than being told what it is. Moreover, because it would need to be about the process, the experience of cooperative learning, it could not be a fixed statement of any sort, whether written or figurative because this would make it closer to teaching about existentialism or to writing about existentialism.

I talked in chapter 4.5 (p.31) about my use of exercises in my teaching and how I usually developed my own exercises in response to the needs of the students.

I therefore developed the following exercise as a Creative Synthesis of all the work represented in this context statement.

Creative Synthesis

This is an exercise to be done with one or more other people. There is no limit to the number of participants but the more that are involved the larger and more complex it gets.

It involves the participants taking turns in putting squares of different sizes and colours on a white grid and it stops when one participant does not wish to put another square down. Put this way, the task sounds so simple that its subtlety can be missed because it is actually an exercise on the experience of working cooperatively and living with the consequences of choice and responsibility, as well as the consequences of denial of choice and responsibility.

The size of the grid, the number and colours of the shapes, as well as the other people involved, reflect the givens of existence; the conditions of our life that we have to determine our response to in order to live a satisfying life. All we have to do in life is to decide what 'squares' to put 'where',

never knowing what effect it will have or what other people will do in response.

The life we lead is the way we meet this dilemma.

The game works with the dilemma between working individually according to one's own chosen priorities and values, and working according to the needs of the group of which one is also a full member.

The paradox is that however the participants individually choose to negotiate this dilemma from minute to minute, what results is always created collectively. It could not have come about through the choices and actions of anyone else. This is reinforced by the fact that there is no record, apart from memory, of who put what piece down.

Like life, the permutations are endless, and just as every person who reads a given book reads a different book because the reader is different, every time we read the same book we read a different book because we are different.

In teaching, as in writing, every course is a different course because the participants are different.

Nevertheless, whatever is produced and however it is produced, it is created collectively by all the participants.

It is this act of mutual creation that distinguishes teaching existentially and writing existentially from teaching about existentialism and writing about existentialism.

For a detailed description of the rules of the game, how it works and an example, see Appendix 3.2.

Finally, as said, this context statement is being written now, but what of the future? What can be done to encourage people to teach existentially and to write existentially? This question suggests that it is not being done at the moment but the truth is that we just do not know. Training methods are underdocumented and underevaluated and Asheri et al (2005), Zepf and Gerlach (2013), Macaskie et al (2013), Yalof (2015), and Meakins (2019) are rare examples.

Rutten and Hulme (2013) reviewed the needs of the psychotherapy teaching community and found that the majority of training was delivered according to tradition, which is to say that it is done the way it has always been done. They conclude that 'there is some doubt whether the current prevalent teaching practice would stand up to scrutiny' [and that] 'building evidence-based teaching in HE and Counselling pedagogy is seen as a useful and under-researched area' (p.7).

While much has been written about writing as reflective practice, i.e. for personal use, (e.g. Bolton 2005, 2014) this has generally not addressed the issue of formal writing for the reader.

This context statement is the first venture into this area.

Psychotherapy teaching is in a privileged position because it is usually done in small groups of not more than 20, and supervision and seminar groups rarely more than 5. This learning context, especially if it is done in the round, can mitigate and may even counter the effects of the

banking method. This is what I have tried to do, with some success I believe, in my teaching.

In the end though, whether teaching is done existentially or not, will come down not to the regulations, nor to the course descriptors, nor to the course title or content, but to the way-of-being of the individual teacher who will need to embrace the challenge of not only asking the questions which he or she does not know the answer to and but also encouraging the students to ask the questions to which they do not know the answer to.

This means letting go of certainty and believing in the primacy of human freedom, in the full knowledge that what follows cannot be predicted.

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